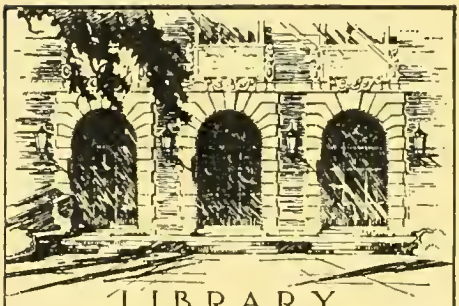

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THE RED FELUCCA.

CHAPTER I.

"It blows hard, and right in one's teeth," said a tall, strongly-built man, in years about thirty, pacing as well as he could, from the unsteady motion, the deck of a very handsome craft, felucca-rigged—that is, with three lateen sails, a custom peculiar to vessels in the Mediterranean sea.

"Yes," returned the *padrone;* "but I have seen it blow harder, if that's a consolation, Tomasso Franchi."

"*Sacristie!*" returned the said Franchi;

"it may be to you, but to me, whose life depends on a quick passage to Genoa, it is something. If the 'Prima' slipped her cable four hours after our leaving Bastia, she will overhaul you."

"Not she," returned the *padrone*, "though she is the fastest galley out of Genoa; but working to windward in this cross sea, in which she cannot use her oars, the 'Santa Catarina,' with four hours' start, will beat her, take my word for it."

"I hope so; once in Genoa, and in the household of the Count Marco Remini, I shall be safe."

"Well, there's no use walking this slippery deck. Come below, and tell me how the deuce you, a Corsican bandit, can ever expect to be received into the orderly household of the handsome Count Remini, as he is universally styled."

The felucca, the "Santa Catarina," on whose deck the above conversation took

place, was a remarkably handsome and very fast vessel of her class. She was commonly known as the "Red Felucca," from the colour of her sails, stained or dyed a deep red. She was about one hundred and thirty tons, and we must add, bore—or rather her *padrone* did—a most suspicious character. She was well-known to be a notorious smuggler —not that at the period of our story, a short time before the Genoese finally lost their rule over the Corsicans, a smuggler was, by any means, considered a very disreputable character.

But the "Red Felucca," whose ostensible occupation was trading between the ports of Genoa and the various ports in the island of Corsica, was suspected of worse acts than smuggling. Be it as it may, her owner had hitherto escaped detection. Till a man is fairly caught committing a crime, the simple fact of being suspected will not hang him.

The cabin of the felucca, expressly fitted

up for passengers, was ample and well-adapted for the constant intercourse carried on between Genoa, Bastia, and San Fiorenza. The proud republic of Genoa held an uncertain rule over Corsica; the finances of this once rival of Venice were exhausted, her colonies in the east wrested from her, and she was shorn of all, save the remembrance of the glorious past, when the fleets of Genoa had swept the waters of the Mediterranean as their mistress, and her flag floated over wealthy and far distant provinces, won by her valour, and retained by her wisdom.

Placing on the cabin table a flask of unexceptionable wine, the juice of the Sicilian grape, from Marsala, the *padrone* (Luigi Carnege), and Tomasso Franchi sat down for half-an-hour's confidential conversation. They were first cousins; the *padrone* was, however, only half a Corsican by birth.

"Now, Tomasso," said the skipper; "just let me hear how you come to be in such a

predicament, and how you expect to gain the protection of the young Count Remini."

"*Sacristie!*" returned Franchi, holding his horn of wine, and steadying himself after a heavy plunge of the felucca into a head sea; "you are at home here, Luigi. I am not altogether a bad sailor, but this vessel of yours pitches into the troughs of the seas as if she didn't intend coming up again."

"Ah! she's a beauty in a head sea; there's not a craft out of Genoa, of a hundred and fifty tons, would face this *tramontane* gale, and make head-way against it."

"Well, *Corpo di Bacco*! it may be so," returned Franchi; "you know that there was always a *vendetta* between our family and the Caraffa's, who killed my great grandfather and two of his daughters, and burnt their house and homestead. Well, we have gone on ever since, now and then killing one another when we could; but, you see, our Genoese rulers won't stand this custom

of the country, the *vendetta traversa*, and the new laws punish with death what they please to call assassination. Well, it chanced that I encountered one of the Brothers Caraffa in a good situation for a shot, so I killed him. So far there was no harm done; but, you see, his cousin Jacopo saw me fire the shot, and accused me before the Syndic at Ponze, of the murder, as he called it; and besides accusing me of taking my just revenge, he called me a bandit; I struck him dead with my poignard, fled, and succeeded in reaching Bastia. You were luckily in port, so I swam aboard, just as you were weighing anchor. You see, I had a sharp and hard tussle to save my life, for if caught, the Genoese governor at Bastia would have hung me without trial. Once in Genoa, and under the protection of a nobleman, I am safe."

"*Ah*! *sacristie*!" said the *padrone*, "you are too free with your stiletto. When you

get to Genoa you must recollect bravos are not tolerated there now as they were fifty years ago. You will have a taste of the galleys if you use your steel."

"Don't be alarmed, Luigi," returned the Corsican; "I have other objects in view. I only acted against the Caraffas as they would have done against me, if they had the opportunity."

"Perhaps so," observed the skipper; "but under what pretence can you seek service in the household of Marco Remini."

"I will tell you. You know the young Count has large estates in the Cape Corsica. His sister, Marguerite Remini, married the Count Carignano, who is now commander of San Fiorenza and the entire Cape. Now, though the Genoese have some suspicion of the case, they little think how soon the whole island of Corsica will break into insurrection, and this time, Luigi—mark my words—they will lose the island for ever. My

stay in Genoa will be short; the moment the insurrection breaks out I'm off. I have a part to play in the Cape."

"*Diavolo*! Tomasso, you have a round-about way of coming to the point."

"Oh! you want to know how I shall enter the Count's household; I'll tell you. Don't you know my father had a large farm on the Remini estate in the Cape, and that he saved Marco Remini's father's life, when, whilst hunting, he would have been slain by a savage boar, and that he lost the use of his left arm by a blow from the brute's tusks. I shall throw myself on the Count's mercy, claim his protection, and remind him of his father's pledge, that a Remini owed his life to a Franchi. Marco Remini is said to be one of the most gallant officers in the Genoese navy, generous, singularly handsome, and brave."

"Yes, he's all that," returned the skipper; "and what's more, he's going to marry the

handsomest and wealthiest maiden in Genoa."

"Ah!" returned Franchi, rubbing his hands; "I think I shall do something there before long. By the bye, how did you get off in that little affair, off the Gulf of San Fiorenza?"

"Oh! aye; I know what you mean," said the skipper; "the fog clearing nearly betrayed me. However, hereafter, we must not make such mistakes in flags so near the shore. I deceived the guarda costa, and a present of one hundred dollars settled it."

Whilst the two cousins were conversing in the cabin the strong *tramontane* gale, as the sun declined, lulled, and before morning shifted into the westward. The "Santa Catarina," therefore, could lie her course, and the following day entered the noble harbour of Genoa.

After a long conference with the skipper of the "Santa Catarina," Tomasso Franchi was

put ashore and furnished with sufficient funds to purchase proper costume in order at once to present himself at the palace of the Count Remini.

Though at the latter end of the eighteenth century, the nobles of Genoa still retained some of their feudal grandeur, still affected the Spanish costume and maintained considerable numbers of idle retainers from their country serfs; the professed bravo, who a few years previously strutted openly and audaciously in the court yards and halls of the nobles, no longer existed as a necessity to the *suite* of a noble, and were petted and feared by their patrons, as instruments to carry out their system of revenge by assassination. The bravo, or rather assassin, was still to be hired for the same purposes; but he no longer could expect to escape from the punishment of his crime.

The palace of the young Count Remini was in the Strada Balbi. The noble man-

sions in this street still exist in their ancient grandeur; no alteration whatever has taken place in their exterior appearance.

Tomasso Franchi, modestly attired, proceeded, the day after his arrival, to the palace Remini, and requested of the major-domo an audience of the count.

Tomasso Franchi was a strong, well made man, highly respectable in appearance; but notwithstanding that his features were good, the general expression of his countenance was far from pleasing, and when giving way to passion, to which he was extremely prone, his dark, heavy brows almost meeting, gave a sinister and repulsive expression to his countenance.

"What name shall I say?" enquired the major-domo, surveying the visitor inquiringly, and not seeming particularly pleased after his examination.

"Tomasso Franchi, from his lordship's estate in Corsica."

"Oh!" returned the venerable major domo, a very old and attached servant of the Remini family; "come with me. I have some memory of that name. My lord has just come from the arsenal, and is disengaged."

Tomasso Franchi was conducted into a long and handsome saloon, hung with very choice pictures, by the old masters, and there he beheld the young Count, gazing out from the window over the waters of the harbour, for the backs of the palaces in the Strada Balbi, on the south side, command a magnificent view across the wide harbour of Genoa, to the gigantic Pharo on the west mole, and over the broad expanse of sea that lies between Genoa and the island of Corsica.

"My lord," said the major-domo, on entering; "here is Tomasso Franchi, from Corsica, who wishes to see you."

Marco, Count of Remini, turned, and advanced towards the Corsican, who bowed most humbly.

Marco Remini was, at this period, five-and-twenty, and accounted the handsomest man in the republic, and as gallant as he was handsome.

"Franchi? Yes, I remember that name well. I have heard my father say he owed a debt of gratitude to one Antonio Franchi, an old retainer and tenant of his. Are you of the same family?"

"My lord, I am the son of Antonio Franchi, who saved your lordship's father's life. My lord, I come to seek your protection; and hope, if it so please you, to enter your lordship's household."

"My protection you shall have," said the Count; "and you are also welcome to my purse. If after trial I find you worthy, you shall have your wish granted. You have only lately left Corsica?"

"Three days ago, my lord."

"Why did you leave the island to seek service in Genoa at your time of life? for, if I

recollect rightly, the Franchis held a respectable situation as landowners. I remember your father's farm, when a boy, or rather a youth, I often hunted the buffalo over his land. I do not remember you."

"After my father's death, my lord, my elder brother led a wild and reckless life. I lived with an uncle, near Carto. The Franchi got into *vendetta* with the Caraffas, and—" Tomasso hesitated.

"Ah!" said the Count, his features contracting; "I see, that curse of Corsica still bears its fruit; even the punishment of death does not stay the assassin's hand."

Tomasso's cheek flushed, and had the young noble looked into the features of his visitor, he would have noticed the remarkable contraction of his brows that rendered his countenance so repulsive.

"Then, doubtless, Tomasso Franchi," continued Marco Remini, "you have been concerned in a *vendetta*?"

"Yes, my lord," returned the Corsican, boldly; "the Caraffa slew men of my blood, and I, in my turn, killed two of their race."

"It's bad; it's worse than bad. It's murder, a murder of a vile and destestable kind, inflicting on the innocent the punishment due to their forefathers' errors. However, Tomasso Franchi, you shall have my protection. I owe your family a father's life. When this crime you have committed has ceased to create inquiry, I shall place in your hands a sufficient sum to take you out of the republic, and to seek your fortunes elsewhere; but I candidly tell you, you cannot expect ever to form one of my household. I will order the major-domo to see you well lodged and taken care of; and, for present use, accept this purse."

Franchi took the well-filled purse, bowing low; but in his heart evil thoughts and purposes of revenge upon the young noble-

man, who, he considered, denounced him as a murderer, took deep root.

Marco, Count de Remini, was the last male descendant of a proud line, whose chief Ligurian possessions had been swept away by the contentions and revolutions caused by party feuds during the last days of the republic.

He still retained three fine estates in the Island of Corsica, but after the insurrection that broke out in that Island, under the leadership of the celebrated Paoli, shortly after the advent of Franchi's arrival in Genoa, only Bastia, San Fiorenza, and Calvi, remained subject to Genoa. Thus, should Genoa never recover her sway over Corsica, the Count's estates were irrevocably lost to him.

CHAPTER II.

At the period of Tomasso Franchi's arrival in Genoa, the Count Remini was betrothed to one of the loveliest maidens in the city.

Monimia Donato had been an orphan from an early age ; her guardian, the Marchese Morsini, proud of the exquisite beauty of his ward, and of her being the wealthiest heiress in the republic, was extremely anxious to match her with one of the highest in the land; and, for this purpose, selected the Prince de Dalmano, a gentlemen in years about thirty-six, of a handsome person and princely for-

tune. But Monimia, at this time approaching her twentieth year, had already surrendered her heart into the keeping of the handsome and chivalrous Count Remini; and as her father had specially directed that she should consult her own inclination when she married, provided the object of her choice was noble, and his character without blemish, her guardian had no power to dispute her choice.

In vain the Marchese endeavoured to show that a union with the Count Remini, who would, most probably, be deprived of his estates, would be indiscreet; Monimia would laughingly and coaxingly interrupt her guardian, saying, with one of her irresistible smiles,

"The more reason, dear sir, that I should share my uncoveted wealth with my noble lover. Are not the laurels he gained by his valour and skill in the Levant and the Morea a thousand times more dear to a woman's heart than wealth?"

The Marquis, a good-hearted man, despite his love of aggrandisement, yielded; for not a shade of reproach obscured the noble name of Remini.

Monimia's love for Marco Remini was a boundless passion. As pure and chaste in mind and thoughts as lovely in person and face, her intercourse with her lover was one of heart and soul.

Some few months yet remained to the period fixed upon for their union.

During the period of the three months of Tomasso Franchi's stay under the roof of Marco Remini, this bandit, for such he really was, had become passionately enamoured of Monimia's favourite attendant, a very handsome and discreet damsel, but something of a coquette. Tomasso Franchi was not a man likely to gain a young maiden's heart, and after a time she told him so, and that she considered his attentions a persecution; but he still persisted, and even threatened her;

then the young girl complained to Monimia, who gently stated the case to her lover.

"Ah!" said Marco Remini, "it is time that man should leave Genoa; he can now return to Corsica without fear. I did not like him on my first interview, and a further investigation of his character has satisfied me he is little worthy of my protection."

On returning to his mansion, after this conversation, the Count sent for Tomasso Franchi, and quietly told him to cease his visits to the Donato mansion, as no one there coveted them ; in fact, the Lady Monimia's attendant had requested his interference to prevent them.

"In my opinion," continued Marco Remini, "it is time you seek fortune elsewhere. I shall place two thousand crowns at your disposal ; with that sum you can settle in Corsica or elsewhere."'

"My lord, you shall be obeyed; permit me a few days' longer residence, and I shall

be ready to depart, deeply grateful to your lordship for your generosity.

Of an easy and generous nature, the Count replied, "Be it so, but refrain from any intercouse with the Donato family."

Tomasso Franchi, with his heart trembling with passion, and vowing vengeance upon all who thus thwarted him, retired.

Three nights after this interview, Marco Remini returned from the Arsenal, where he had been inspecting two war galleys, fitting out for Corsica, to prepare to attend at a ball given at the Morisini Palace, he entered his dressing-room, and was just about to summon his attendant, when his attention was attracted by the unusual sight of a common poignard sticking upright in the dressing-table.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as he laid his hand on the hilt to draw it out; "is this a gentle hint from a rival?"

The point was driven through a folded

paper, which he opened, and read with a flush of indignation rising to his face. The two or three lines it contained were:—

"Remember, Marco Remini, you have thwarted and grossly insulted me, and so has your intended bride. Remember! Tomasso Franchi's dagger can pierce your heart as easily as it does this table."

"Ah!" said the Count, with a contemptuous smile, as he threw the poignard through the open window into the garden beneath; "just as I thought—a confounded hypocrite, and a most ungrateful rascal."

He summoned his principal personal attendant.

On looking round his chamber he perceived his private cabinet had been broken open, and, on examination, found jewels and a considerable amount in gold abstracted. After a moment's consideration, he resolved to say nothing to any one of the robbery, or of the dagger and letter; he, therefore, re-

moved the cabinet into another chamber, and locked the door; he did this, fearing lest any rumour of the circumstance should reach Monimia's ears, and alarm her.

"Have you seen Franchi?" questioned the Count of his attendant, Phillipo, as he entered the room.

"Not since this morning, my lord, when he was saying he no longer considered it safe for a Corsican to remain in Genoa."

"Ah! then very likely he has taken himself off, and got without the gates before they closed."

"There is not much loss in his company," said Phillipo, as he laid out a superb Spanish costume for his master's toilet.

"I think you are right, Phillipo; I have heard rumours of his quarrelsome disposition and surly temper."

"I think, my lord, he was a man of a savage nature, and quite reckless of what he said and did."

Amongst the nobles assembled in the palace of the Marchese Morisini, little else was talked of but the desperate state of affairs in Corsica.

Most of the nobility and gentry drew large sums from their conquered or purchased estates in the island, and several depended on that revenue for their chief support; their supplies thus cut off rendered them furious against the brave islanders; their threatened vengeance spoken against the rebels would have led a stranger to suppose that the Corsicans were committing a vile and dastardly act in declaring their independance, and driving out the invaders of their beloved country.

The beautiful Monimia Donato was sitting on a sofa in one of the splendid saloons of the Morisini Palace, and beside her was Marco Remini. Tall and eminently graceful the heiress of Donato appeared, beside the commanding figure of her lover, as one formed to match him in personal grace and elegance.

The Genoese at this period affected the Spanish costume, and were attired splendidly and extravagantly, and continued to do so until the French Revolution, like a devastating current, swept away doge, and senators, and the Spanish costume with it, into the ocean of oblivion.

"This is most disastrous news, my beloved," said Marco Remini, in a low voice. "We shall undoubtedly lose Corsica—Bastia and San Fiorenza alone hold out. I feel very uneasy respecting my sister and her husband, who are shut up in the fortress of San Fiorenza. They can scarcely hold out till our tardy reinforcements are sent to aid them, or bring them to Genoa to avoid captivity."

"I wish Marguerite had not insisted on joining her husband; and yet," added Monimia, in a low voice, "who would not, in her case have done the same. I know, dear Marco, you are not one of those who think this struggle for liberty and independence

calls for cruel vengeance on those brave islanders, who seek to recover their freedom by force of arms, but withhope on their side.''

"Yes, *cara*, all this I admit," returned the Count, "and I cannot help admiring them. I may say I am by birth a Corsican, for I was born in the Castle of Nenza, during a visit my dear mother made to the island. If we had governed with moderation, and mercy, tempered with justice, this revolt would not have taken place. Now, though Genoa may not be able, single-handed, to re-conquer the island, yet, as a kingdom in itself, Corsica can never exist. Depend upon it, Genoa will sell her rights to France, and France will rapidly overrun the island, despite the bravery and wisdom of the gallant Paoli; but let it turn out as it will, dear Monimia, my estates are lost, and my beloved will give this dear hand," and he laid his gently on the fair hand beside him, "to a landless gentleman."

"What an idea, dear Marco," said the maiden, looking with fond devotion into the thoughtful features of her lover. "What value is wealth and land to me? I gave my heart to Marco Remini, not to his wealth. You are the same Marco Remini now as then. Have not I wealth and land enough for both? or do you shrink, dear Marco, from accepting riches with me? If so," and her bright and dazzling eyes sparkled with the feelings of her loving heart, "let me endow a nunnery with my wealth—give it to the needy, and then take me for myself. Think you I shall ever bestow a thought upon the riches I cast away, as long as Marco Remini's love and devotion are mine?"

"You are an angel, my own love," said the Count, fervently, but before he could finish what he intended to say in reply, the Prince de Dalmano, a senator, and the nobleman the Marchese Morisini had intended for

the husband of his ward, sauntered up to where the lovers were seated.

"Well, Count," said the senator, "this startling news, received late this evening by the 'Prima' galley, is really bad for you," and he looked at Monimia as he said the words with a very meaning look.

"Why so, Prince?" asked Marco. "It is bad news for the republic, I am aware; but why particularly so for me?"

"Because," said the Prince, "It tears you from the loadstone that attracts you. You are deputed by the senate to sail in command of the 'Prima' the day after to-morrow, to take five hundred men to add to the garrison of Bastia. That city we must hold. I trust the fair lady Monimia will pardon me for being the bearer of so disagreeable a mandate?"

"Marco Remini," returned Monimia, quite calmly, "will always be ready to serve his

country. Private feelings weigh not in the balance with public duty."

"I expected this," observed the Count to the senator, "but not on quite so short a notice. The five hundred men will be simply a reinforcement to the Governor of Bastia. Will the fortress of San Fiorenza be left unassisted?"

"I suppose the Governor of Bastia will do what he thinks fit respecting the small garrison in San Fiorenza. The fact is we are offered help from France on certain conditions. Your estates, count, are in the Cape, are they not?"

"The castles of Otrano and Nenza are, or rather were mine, by right of purchase by my grandfather."

"Ah!" returned the Prince, who also possessed estates near Corte, in Corsica, "it is, I fear, very doubtful if we ever regain our dominion over the whole island. It may be possible to hold Bastia and Cavil."

"Well," observed Remini, "we must bear our reverses as calmly as we can. As far as my opinion goes, our case is hopeless in the present state of our finances."

After some further remarks and some compliments paid to Monimia, the Prince passed on.

"This order to leave certainly comes very suddenly, my dear Marco," said the fair Monimia, as, taking the arm of her lover, they proceeded to the splendidly-illuminated gardens of the palace.

"Yes, dearest, too sudden. It yet wants three months to the period fixed upon by the Marchese, when I can call this dear hand mine," replied Marco, thoughtfully. "It is not likely I shall be back for many months, for no doubt Paoli will attempt the reduction of Bastia or Calvi, and I shall be wanted. Would my beloved object to becoming mine before my departure? I should feel a world of happiness."

"I am yours, beloved Marco, heart and soul. And though I feared from maidenly scruples to propose this project, my heart would be more at ease as your wife. I should then be removed from all importunities, and could live retired and far from society, and think and dream only of you, and pray for your safety and speedy return.'

"A thousand thanks! Oh! how happy your consent makes me. To-morrow, early, I will wait upon your guardian, and state our wishes. I shall then know the moment of my departure for Corsica."

The following morning the Count Remini received his orders from the senate to prepare the "Prima" galley for immediate service, and to embark five hundred men, with cannon and ammunition, for Bastia, where he was to remain under the governor's orders. He was to sail the following day, without fail.

Remini at once proceeded to the Morisini

Palace, and requested an interview with Monimia's guardian.

The Marchese received him kindly, saying,

"You have received a hasty order from the senate. I hope the succours you take to Corsica will enable the governor to hold Bastia till our negotiations with France enable us effectually to overcome this rebellion."

"I hope so, Marchese; but I am thinking now upon a much more interesting subject to me."

He then stated his and Monimia's wishes respecting an immediate marriage.

The Marchese looked surprised, and even a little chagrined. He remained thoughtful for several moments, and then said,

"As you both desire this hasty and somewhat indiscreet marriage, I shall not oppose it; but I insist on one condition: that the marriage ceremony takes place to-morrow in

the church of the Annunciata, in presence of four selected witnesses, and that, there and then, on the termination of the ceremony, you take leave of your fair bride, and sail for your destination."

"Such, my lord, was our intention, when I solicited this favour."

After a few preliminaries were settled, four cavaliers and four young ladies were selected, with the approval of Monimia. The Count then retired to the Arsenal to hasten the preparations for embarking the troops.

The following morning, in the presence of eight noble witnesses, Monimia Donata became Countess of Remini. One loving embrace, one kiss upon her trembling lips, and the lovers, now husband and wife, parted; the Countess returning to the palace of her guardian, Marco Remini on board his galley. An hour afterwards the "Prima" was warped out of the Arsenal into the waters of the port; her lofty lateen sails were spread to a

favourable breeze, and, passing the noble Pharo of old Genoa, she bore away across the tideless sea for the sea-girt isle of Corsica.

CHAPTER III.

The "Prima" galley, of which the Count Remini was the commander, was almost the last of those graceful picturesque vessels of the middle age built by the Republic of Genoa. She was of immense length, could carry a thousand equipped men, and in calms was pulled by sixty oars, manned by galley slaves. This magnificent vessel, some years afterwards, was cut out of the harbour of Genoa by the boats of Lord Keith's squadron then blockading Genoa, after a desperate and

gallant resistance, and attracted the universal admiration of the British squadron.

It was the month of December, when the "Prima" sailed from Genoa; the wind blew fresh from the north, the day was gloomy and cold. Marco Remini walked the quarter deck, buried in deep thought; he was thinking of Monimia, and was also thinking that he had been despatched from Genoa in a very hasty manner, and that several months might elapse before he beheld his bride again. However, there was one vast consolation—Monimia was irrevocably his; he had secured the treasure and he gloried in the fond love of the most beautiful woman in Genoa.

Before the shades of night fell upon the foaming billows of the Mediterranean, the lofty mountains of the Ligurian coast had sunk to view, and when the sun rose the following day the snow-capped summit of Monte Rotunda was distinctly visible, and before mid-day the harbour of Bastia was in sight.

As they neared the pier, a large xebecque, with her huge lateen sails dyed a deep red, was coming out from the port of Bastia. The Count Rimini looked at her as she shot by, simply remarking to Lieutenant Bartolo, who was examining her with his glass,

"That craft carries her very lofty sails uncommonly well."

How little did he imagine, as he uttered the words, the pain and suffering that would be inflicted upon his beloved wife and himself through the agency of that red felucca.

The town and fortress of Bastia presents a picturesque and imposing appearance when approached from the sea; many of the Genoese possessed, at the period of our story, magnificent palaces there, almost rivalling those of Genoa. Rounding the only pier existing at that period, the "Prima" anchored, and preparations were at once made to land the troops, a great concourse of people thronging

down to the pier as soon as the "Prima" came alongside.

Marco Remini, leaving his officers to superintend the landing of the men and stores, proceeded at once with the private despatches he carried to the palace of the governor.

The Marchese Borghetta was at this time governor of Bastia and all the territory yet remaining as an appendage to the Genoese Republic.

In times of peace the Marchese, who was nearly seventy, was totally unfit to govern a high-spirited, liberty-loving people like the Corsicans, but ten times more incapable of acting judiciously during a period of partisan warfare. Timid, vacillating, and harsh, also selfish to a degree, instead of checking the insurrection, he added fuel to the flame by harsh and impotent orders, and by thwarting the officers in command of the troops that garisoned the important towns, and who

really knew the tempers and feelings of the islanders. His name and his powerful family influence, however, retained him in a situation he ought to have abandoned long before the insurrection broke out.

Remini was received by the Governor in a pettish, querulous manner.

"What!" he exclaimed, "they send me only five hundred men and a few cannon, when the Corsican rebel Paoli is at the head of four thousand, and advancing upon Bastia."

"I heard the Prince Dalmano say," returned the Count, "that five hundred men added to your garrison now in Bastia, and the troops driven out of Calvi, could hold Bastia, having the sea open, for a twelve month, against all Corsica."

"Tush! What does he know about the strength of our fortifications, or the power of the rebels?" returned the Governor, pettishly; "they attack a place like fiends and take

towns by assault, as if they had neither walls nor cannon. Ah!" he added, as he finished reading the despatch, "we are to receive reinforcements from France. By the Doge's head, the French troops will soon crush this rebellion!"

"Yes," remarked our hero, "and keep the island afterwards for themselves. Have you any news, my lord, from San Fiorenza; I am anxious about my brother-in-law, the Count Carignani and his family."

"The last intelligence I received," answered the Governor, carelessly, "was that the Count had been driven out of San Fiorenza, but at once possessed himself of the strong tower and castle of Fornalle, and was there invested. I could send no troops to assist him, for Paoli lies between Bastia and the Cape."

"Permit me, my lord," said Marco Remini, anxiously, "to proceed in the 'Prima' to his assistance; I can rescue him and his

brave comrades easily. You do not require the 'Prima' here at present."

"How do you know that, Count?" returned the Governor, angrily. "Suppose Bastia is taken by assault, how am I and my family to escape. No, no; you are placed under my orders, so wait—at all events," he added, seeing any angry flush come over the young count's cheek, "a few days; we shall see. Apartments shall be prepared for you in the citadel."

"Thank you, my lord; I shall remain on board my galley till my presence is required."

A whole fortnight passed, and no signs of the army of General Paoli investing Bastia. Fornalle still held out, but provisions were getting scarce; so Marco Remini determined to make another attempt to persuade the Governor to let him go to his brother-in-law's assistance.

Meeting an officer he formerly knew to be

attached to the troops under the Count Carignani, in an ante-room of the Governor's palace, he accosted him eagerly.

"How is this, Captain Lotero—you here? I thought you were with Carignani in Fornalle."

"I was with him in San Fiorenza," returned the officer, "and when we were driven out of that fortress, your brother-in-law induced me to cross the island in disguise to see if an armed vessel could be sent by the Governor to take off his wife and child; he himself would hold out to the last; but the Marchese says he has neither vessel of war nor men to spare. But here you are with a noble ship and a fine crew; let us see what you can do with the old man."

"I will go, whether he likes it or not," said the Count, sharply. "Could you, do you think, get back over land to Fornalle?"

"Not now," replied Captain Lotero. "There is a fellow calling himself Colonel Franchi—"

"Franchi!" repeated the Count; "it is not possible that can be the same rascal to whom I gave protection in Genoa about five or six weeks ago."

"This must be the same ruffian," said the Captain; "he boasts of some exploit he performed in escaping from Genoa; he was formerly a notorious bandit and assassin; he has now collected five hundred worse bandits than himself, has seized upon Nonza, and holds the Cape for General Matri. This cruel ruffian has put several Genoese to death; if I fell into his hands he would hang me."

"Just wait here; I will go to the Governor, and see what I can do."

Marco Remini found the old Marchese as obstinate as ever; the Count got angry.

"Stay," said the Marchese; "I will not let the 'Prima' leave the harbour till the two armed ships, promised in the despatch you brought, arrive; but you can take the xebecque that is laid up close to where you

anchor ; she was a *guarda costa*, and is a very good vessel ; take her and any of your men who will volunteer for your mad enterprise, but leave your lieutenant in command of the 'Prima' during your absence."

Remini consented to this plan ; he returned, and finding Captain Lotero waiting for him, they proceeded on board the "Prima," and at once our hero ordered the old xebecque to be hauled alongside the galley to be fitted for sea and stored with provisions.

The xebecque was found to be a very old and somewhat crazy and leaky craft, about eighty tons ; however, twelve hours under the hands of the "Prima's" crew, made some change for the better in her appearance and equipment. She carried four eight-pounders, but these were old, rusty, and past use ; so they were put on shore on the pier, and two serviceable twelve-pounders replaced them ; the cabin was made as comfortable as possible, and embarking fifteen eager volunteers, with

Captain Lotero and his own man, Phillipo Crotoni, Count Remini cast off the following day, and made sail for the Cape.

The weather was extremely boisterous, and the wind, on doubling the Cape, dead on end, and the sea so cross and heavy that the old xebecque laboured terribly, and very soon convinced her crew that the vigour of her youth was gone, and that her leaks were not confined to any particular spot, for she strained so severely in her plunges into the head seas, that her seams opened, and it required all the skill of her crew to keep her afloat.

"This is a crazy old tub," remarked Captain Lotero to our hero, on the third day, as they made a deperate attempt to weather the northern head of the Gulf of San Fiorenza.

"She would make an exceedingly good diver," returned our hero, considerably vexed. "We shall not weather yonder head whilst this confounded gale lasts. We must anchor in Oleano Bay."

Putting up the helm they ran into the sheltered bay of Oleano, and, having anchored, commenced repairing damages. The next day it blew harder than ever. It was the season of gales off Cape Corsica, so Remini said to Captain Lotero, as they walked the short deck of the xebecque, and looked up at the forest crowned heights that surmounted the bay on three side,

"I will land with my attendant Phillipo, dressed in the attire of Corsican peasants ; I have only to cross yonder hills, and then a walk of five miles will give me a view of Fornalle. I shall see if our flag surmounts its walls."

"You will run a tremendous risk," said Captain Lotero ; "that brigand, Franchi, is not far off this part of the coast ; the very peasants themselves would think as little of bringing down a Genoese with their gun as they would a wood pigeon."

"Oh ! I have no fear of the peasantry, even

if I should be discovered. All this land to within two miles of Fiorenza belongs to me; at least it did before this insurrection, and our family were dearly loved. I have spent many of the happiest months of my life at Fiorenza. When my dear mother was alive she was very partial to Corsica, and at Nonza I was born; many in these districts will remember me. I speak the language. All Corsicans go armed—war or no war—and it would puzzle a native to discover my being a Genoese when attired as a Corsican."

Accordingly early the next day, dressed and armed like the peasantry of the Cape, Remini and his attendant, Phillipo, were landed at the foot of the lofty hill that sheltered the bay, telling the second lieutenant, who remained in the zebecqe, that he would be back by sunset.

Marco determined to proceed to the cottage of a highly respectable landowner, long devotedly attached to his family, and with whom

he had often hunted the muffoli and wild boar. He knew this man would give him the best intelligence respecting the little garrison at Fornalle. Fondly loving his sister Marguerite, the only one of his family left him, the Count felt deeply anxious concerning her and her child's safety.

Attired in the grey cloth breeches and long gaiters, belt with poignard, and pistol and carbine slung at their backs, the Count and his attendant resembled the warlike Corsican peasant too closely to create a suspicion that the dress covered the bodies of the hated Genoese.

Though blowing a heavy breeze of wind, the day was clear and cold. Having landed, they proceeded to climb the forest clad hills of Tomino ; this was not done without considerable labour and difficulty, but both were strong, active men, and they made their way through the wood of evergreen oak (the ilex) at good speed. On the summit our hero knew

they would come upon the track that led through the celebrated pass of Nonza, the only thoroughfare from the Cape into the province of San Fiorenza. It took them more than two hours before they cleared the wood and stood on the level land on the summit, from which they gained a distant view of Tomino, a place famous in Corsican annals. The peasants of this little village and pass made at one time a most heroic stand against two thousand Genoese, fully equipped with cannon and military stores, and who totally failed in reducing the place.

"We must avoid the village, Phillipo," remarked the Count to his attendant, who, strong man as he was, was teeming with perspiration from the difficulty of the ascent. "No doubt it is held by an insurgent force."

"What a country for hills, my lord. *Madonna!* it is said that the Corsicans are never fat; Holy Mary! no wonder, if it tasks a man

in winter to scale these hills, what would it be on a sultry summer day."

"You are unaccustomed to this work, Phillipo. The hardy Corsicans, in times of peril, perch their habitations on the very peaks of almost inaccessible hills; they are like goats ascending and descending precipices. This Cape is nothing to the mountain ranges near Corte and Monte Rotunda. Let us move on; three or four years' absence has not weakened my memory of this part of the country."

As they pursued their way over a level, beaten track, they perceived several peasants habited like themselves, walking across the cultivated parts of the land; all carrying the short carbine slung at their backs. But one thing our hero and his attendant did not perceive, and that was that they were followed step by step by two men somewhat differently attired to the Corsican peasant, who

were armed with poignard and pistol, and carried their heavy carbine in their hands; they also wore a different cap, partly of grey cloth, with a short feather and clasp. These men had watched the Xebecque from the moment she anchored under Oleano Head, and now followed the Count and his attendant at a cautious distance, concealed by the thick hedges bordering the track they were on.

The travellers, after a sharp hour's walk, came in sight of a large and well built farm house in the cottage style, near which they perceived a man driving a lot of cattle into a field, who, just as they came up, turned round, and at once saw they were strangers.

Just then a girl came out from the cottage and called out, "Pasquale, dinner is waiting; make haste."

"All right!" exclaimed the Count, "this is Pasquale Rossi." He stepped up to the man, who still regarded both with great curiosity. He was tall and exceedingly well proportioned,

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with a very expressive, pleasing countenance. He was some three or four years older than the count; he also was armed. "Well, Pasquale Rossi," said the Count, holding out his hand, "have you forgotten your companion in many a boar hunt? Look at me well."

"*Ha! Madonna!*" returned the Corsican, with a startled look, and grasping the Count's hand eagerly, and with every appearance of devoted friendship, "is it possible? But by my faith! you are running a fearful risk, my good lord," and he looked all round keenly. "We are wrong standing here; come under our roof at once. You do not know, Count, that within a mile of us there are a hundred cut throats, that would as willingly shoot you down as they would a mad dog. Are there only you two?"

"Only two, Pasquale, therefore not likely to do much harm, or run much risk."

"Except to yourself, my lord; but let us in."

During this short dialogue, the Corsican girl stood at the cottage door, gazing at her brother's companions, but without hearing what was said, but as they came up close to the door, and Remini gazed into her beautiful dark eyes, she started, coloured to the temples, and appeared bewildered.

She was but a small landholder's sister, still she was as bright and charming a girl, and graceful withal, as any maiden on the soil of Corsica. She wore a tight fitting boddice of grey cloth, and a short bright red petticoat, which displayed a remarkably neat foot and leg.

The count held out his hand, saying, "What a woman you are grown, Marguerite," and as the girl, with a smile of surprise and pleasure, placed her hand in his, the Count drew her towards him, kissing her cheek, as a brother would.

"Oh! my lord," said the maiden, "why

do you come here; it's worse than rash. But walk in; some one may be passing by."

The chamber they entered was large and comfortable, with the fire blazing in the ample chimney, and a long oak table was in the middle of the room, and on it smoked the usual Corsican luxury — boiled chesnuts. Pasquale Rossi was above the actual peasant; he was of a good old family, had visited several cities on the continent, and had been tolerably educated. Besides the chesnuts, there was the half of a roast kid, and some oaten bread, all served upon the platters made of the beautiful wood of the arbutus.

Whilst the Count and his attendant were entering the cottage of Pasquale Rossi, the two men tracking his footsteps were crouched down behind some thick bushes, eagerly watching the movements of the party. As soon as the cottage door was closed they rose and walked at a rapid pace towards the Pass of

Nonza. Over the narrow defile forming this passage, which was extremely narrow and the sides nearly perpendicular, was perched, like an eagle's nest, the once impregnable fortress of Nonza. A straight and precipitous path, between masses of rock, led to the castle gates, and over these gates, upon an embattled wall, were two twelve pounder guns, prepared to defend the pass, should an enemy attempt it.

The two men ascended to the gates, and were at once admitted through a small wicket. They then entered a court of no very great extent, having in the middle a well of immense depth.

Twenty or thirty men were piling their muskets under a shed. One only of the two recent arrivals entered the great hall, meeting as he did so several men coming from the great dining-room.

"*Cospetto*! is that you, Pietro?" said one of the men, stopping to accost the new arrival.

"Have you discovered anything about that strange Xebecque?"

"Yes, *per Bacco*! I rarely fail in my object. I think I have netted a couple of good birds. Where is our Colonel?"

"Just finishing his dinner. He's expecting you, and is rather curious about that said craft."

"*Benissimo*!" said Pietro Campoloro. "I shall expect a good purse for my tidings"

The man walked on, pushed open a great folding door, and entered what was once a very noble and lofty saloon, oak panelled, and the cornices beautifully carved. Some fine pictures once hung against the walls, of which only pieces of frame and canvas remained, the carved work all battered, and the panelling of the walls all defaced, and in places broken into splinters. An immense solid oak table filled the centre of the saloon, and on this table, without cloth, were scattered the various remnants of a rude feast; half

consumed pasties, joints of kid and boar's flesh, heaps of chesnuts, jars of wine, oat cakes, &c., all showed visible signs of rude fare and ruder guests.

Before an immense chimney-piece, sat a man, in a large carved chair, with a goblet and several flasks of wine before him.

The individual in the chair looked up, on hearing the door open, and taking a pipe from his mouth, said,

"So you have come at last, Campoloro. You have been precious long, smelling a rat out."

"*Corpo di Bacco*! *Colonello*," returned Pietro, with a grin. "I've done better than smelling a rat out. I've housed your birds safe and sound, and found another traitor to boot."

"*Ah! Diavolo!* this is good. Help yourself, for you are sure to be hungry, and when you have eaten, let me have the news."

The speaker resumed his pipe.

We need not describe him. We have seen him before, living under the protection of Count Remini, in Genoa, as Tomasso Franchi, but now, promoted to the rank, or rather to the title of Colonel and Custodian of the Pass of Nonza, acting under the *prestige* of General Matri. The fact was, he was surrounded by his old associates, the bandits, so numerous and so audacious at that period, and during the first days of the insurrection tolerated for a time; well understanding which, it was necessary, for their own interests, to make hay while the sun shone.

Pietro Campoloro pulled over the remains of a kid, seized a double handful of chestnuts, and commenced allaying the cravings of an always insatiable appetite. Having satisfied himself, he drank as much wine as he well could in two draughts, and then turned to the Colonel, who had remained quietly smoking and drinking his wine.

"Well, Colonel, I feel better now. Thirty-

six hours' watch, and only a handful of chestnuts and a draught of water to support the fatigue. Ah! it's aggravating nature."

"Go on, and tell me the news; don't waste your breath," returned the Colonel; "begin at the beginning."

"By daybreak yesterday," began Pietro, "according to your orders, Pinelli and I reached the top of the high cliffs of Oleano. *Ber Bacco*! it blew hard, and the sea was all foam and froth. Close in with the coast we caught sight of a xebecque under close canvas, working to windward. I said to Pinelli, 'I wonder if this is the xebecque our Colonel has had information of.' 'Sure to be,' says he. 'No coaster' or trader would poke their noses round the cape in such a sneezer.'

"We sat down to watch, and, *Madonna*! didn't the seas break over the xebecque, which persisted bravely for hours to weather

the head, and run into San Fiorenza; but at last the foresail or something gave way, and she bore up towards sunset, and anchored under the head, close into the shore. We could then see that she was an armed vessel, with thirty or forty men aboard; so we descended the cliffs and took up our stations to watch her. Sheltering ourselves in a hollow, we passed the night, finished our flasks of wine and devoured our pouch of chestnuts.

"The next morning it blew as hard as ever; and presently a boat was launched from the deck of the xebecque, and four men pulled in for the beach. Only two landed, however. Strong active men they were, habited like Corsicans, and armed. One was half a head taller than the other. We kept concealed, close by where they must pass if they intended scaling the hill, and, sure enough, they pushed their way through the brushwood and over the rocks, with great vigour, and as

they passed near us the shortest of the two said, 'If this is the path, my lord, it's the worst of its kind I ever traversed.'"

"*Ha*! *Corpo di Diavolo*!" exclaimed Franchi, striking his huge clenched hand upon the table with such energy that he overturned several flasks, "You say the man said, 'My lord?'"

"*Sansa dubia*," returned Pietro; "I heard the words as plain as I heard the blow of your fist on the table. Yes, he said 'My lord,' and the man laughed, saying, 'Ah! my good Phillipo, a Corsican requires the activity and hardihood of a goat.'"

"Phillipo," repeated Franchi, "all right," and he rubbed his hands together and laughed, and a remarkably ominous laugh was Tomasso Franchi's. "Go on, good Pietro; you shall not regret your fast of thirty-six hours; go on; I think my good lord will live long enough to curse his visit to these parts. What became of them?"

"We followed cautiously, at a distance, and saw them accost Pasquale Rossi, who shook hands with them, and then they all entered the cottage and closed the door, and we hurried on here."

"*Maladetta*! So that cursed Rossi is a traitor," exclaimed Franchi, with a fearful volley of oaths. "I wanted to get a good hold of this hated rebel. I'll sweep the whole brood out of the Capo, or massacre them, or my name's not Franchi. They are joined with the Caraffas. I've slain three of their brood, and, *Madonna*! I have the same steel yet that shed their blood. I know these Rossis and Caraffas have sworn to take my life. Now go," he added, "no time must be lost. Your birds are caged; but we must provide these others with three-inch bars."

CHAPTER IV.

The Countess Remini, after the departure of her husband for Bastia, led a most secluded life, rarely stirring beyond the precincts of the Morisini Palace and gardens. Her guardian, connected with several Venetian families, had proceeded to Venice on pressing business. The Marchesa and her youngest daughter, Julia, to whom Monimia Remini was greatly attached, however remained, and did all they could to console the young bride, who, knowing the chivalric disposition of her beloved husband, dreaded lest he

should undertake some desperate expedition to free his beloved sister and her husband, shut up in San Fiorenza.

Three weeks passed, during which she received a letter from the Count, breathing the fondest love, and stating his impatience at being detained in Bastia by the imbecile governor, and his determination to proceed, in a few days, to the rescue of his sister, whether the governor pleased to give permission or not.

"Ah! I thought so," said the Countess to Julia, who was sitting embroidering with her as she read the letter, her heart beating with anxiety. "Now Marco will embroil himself with our rulers. I know it was the senator, the Prince Dalmano, who arranged his appointment to the 'Prima' on this expedition to Corsica."

"That is possible," replied Julia; "but if Marco had not proceeded to Bastia, he would now be on his way to the East, with the

splendid new ship, just fitted out. He will be back sooner from Corsica."

"Ah! but you do not know, dear Julia, he promised me, that he would retire from the service the moment we were married. He could not refuse the command of the 'Prima' at this juncture, because the situation of Bastia is critical."

"Many of our nobility will lose vast estates if the island is given up," remarked Julia, "and the Count Remini amongst the rest."

"Ah! well," answered the Countess, "thank Heaven I do not covet the estates; the brave islanders have a right to their own."

"Monimia, you are a rebel," said Julia laughing. "The Prince Dalmano knows that in heart you wish Paoli—a hero after your own heart, success—so he sent away the Count to punish you."

Another week passed over and then another,

but no other letter came from the Count. Monimia became alarmed, especially as the owner of a tartana from Bastia stated he had seen the "Prima" galley at anchor, and that Bastia was still free from attack, though it was said that Fiorenza and Fornalle had both surrendered to General Matri.

"How strange," thought the Countess, "if my brother-in-law has surrendered, what is is the Count doing?"

One morning Monimia's favourite attendant rushed into the chamber, followed by Julia Morisini, exclaiming,

"The 'Prima' galley was seen rounding the Pharo."

The Countess attired herself in haste, her cheeks glowing and her fingers tingling from the agitation she felt. She then, with Julia, proceeded to the saloon, the windows of which overlooked the vast harbour of Genoa.

"Look!" said Julia, delightedly, "there

is the 'Prima' without a doubt. What a fine sight!"

Monimia gazed at the graceful vessel as it glided swiftly round the lighthouse, the immense lofty sails filling to the fine westerly breeze, till the tears came into her eyes.

"What affects you, dear Monimia?" said Julia, affectionately. "It is the 'Prima.'"

"Yes, yes, it is the galley, I know," said the Countess. "But I feel certain Marco is not in her. You see, the flag of the Republic is hoisted, but my husband's private ensign does not float over the poop."

"In the excitement, *cara*, the flag may have been forgotten. See, they are furling their huge sails. In a few moments we shall be relieved from this anxious uncertainty."

Before the messenger whom the Countess had instantly sent to the arsenal had returned, Lieutenant Baretti, one of the officers of the "Prima," begged an audience of the Countess.

"I told you, Julia," said Monimia, with a sigh, "that he was not in the galley. Stay with me, whilst I receive the Signor Baretti."

As the lieutenant entered the saloon, the Countess said, with an effort calming her agitation, "I trust you do not bring me evil tidings of the Count, my husband, for by your presence, I can surmise he has not returned in the 'Prima.'"

"I beg you will not needlessly alarm yourself, Countess," said Lieutenant Baretti, struck by the exquisite loveliness of his commander's wife; "there is no danger or fear for his life attending the Count's captivity; it is only a question of ransom."

"Ah! thank God it is no worse," exclaimed the Countess, considerably relieved, "they who hold him captive are welcome to all I possess, if they restore your commander to liberty. May I ask, Lieutenant Baretti, who holds my lord captive, and how the misfortune occurred?"

"You shall hear all I know of the affair, my lady," said the lieutenant. "Our commander sailed in an armed Xebecque, with fifty well armed followers, to rescue the Count Carignano, in order to prevent his falling into the hands of the insurgent Corsicans. It blew a gale of wind, and the Xebecque the governor provided for our commander was a crazy, leaky vessel; so, finding he could not make head against the gale, he anchored, and it seemed landed with only his personal attendant, Phillipo Crotoni."

"How rash!" murmured the Countess.

"We were quite ignorant of this, my lady," continued the lieutenant, "till the Xebecque returned to Bastia. It then appeared that our commander must have fallen into the hands of the rebels, for the Xebecque having waited two days, and not seeing any signs of the Count's returning, we pro-

ceeded into the Gulf of San Fiorenza We were fired at from the Fort Fornalle, which satisfied us it was no longer held by a Genoese force, so we returned, greatly chagrined at the misfortune of our commander."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the Countess, "and is that all the particulars you have gained of the fate of the Count, my husband, and his faithful attendant?"

"You shall hear, Countess. Some days afterwards a boat came along side the galley and a man in her handed on board a letter, saying it was given him to convey on board the 'Prima,' to be given to the officer in command. I opened the letter, which contained this," and the lieutenant handed the Countess a letter he took from his breast pocket. The letter was addressed to the Countess Remini.

Monimia took the missive, but she felt so agitated, that she refrained from opening it

while the lieutenant was present. She, however, said, "May I request to know what your letter contained ?"

"Only two or three lines, Countess. It said that I was to forward the letter enclosed to the Countess Remini; that the Count, her husband, was a prisoner to a Corsican leader; and that the letter enclosed the terms for his release and restoration to liberty. It was signed Colonel Franchi."

"Franchi! Franchi!" repeated the Countess, with a startled look, and turning to the attentive Julia Morsini, she said, "Can it be possible that this Franchi, is the Corsican who dwelt for so many months under the roof of Marco, and was protected by him. If so, surely gratitude would teach him not to injure the man who gave him bread and shelter."

"I always disliked the appearance of that man," said Julia.

Luckily neither the Countess nor Julia were aware of the vile character or the threats of Franchi, the Count Remini having carefully kept his secret.

The Countess gracefully thanked the lieutenant for the trouble he had taken, and he retired. Ere the door was fairly closed, intensely anxious, the Countess broke the seal of the letter, and read its contents aloud to Julia Morisini.

"To the Countess Remini.

"The fortune of war, my Lady Countess, has placed the person of Marco Remini in my power. He remains in my custody.

"For his ransom and that of his attendant, I demand twenty thousand crowns in gold, to be paid into my hands within thirty days from this date. If delayed beyond that, I

cannot be answerable for the Count's life. He may be subjected to the fate of a spy.

"COLONEL TOMASSO FRANCHI."

"Vile, ungrateful, detestable ruffian," exclaimed the Countess, her eyes flashing and her voice trembling with indignation. "Marco Remini treated as a spy. *Ah*! *Madonna*! my noble husband nurtured a serpent under his roof."

"What can we do, dear Monimia," exclaimed Julia, shocked, "this wretch is the audacious villain who threatened your attendant, because she refused to listen to his addresses."

"Yes," answered the Countess, "the same. But there is no time to lose; already fifteen days have gone by. I will instantly procure the money and go with it myself to Bastia and negotiate for my beloved Marco's instant release."

"You, dearest Monimia. Surely there will be great risk."

"Risk, dearest Julia. Ah! *Madre mia*! if a wife won't risk life for a beloved husband, who will? I will sail before twenty-four hours have passed."

"How unfortunate that my father is away," said Julia.

"Perhaps fortunate," returned Monimia; "he might endeavour to prevent my leaving."

The Countess sent for her man of business, and ordered him at once to procure her twenty thousand crowns in gold. The Countess, by her marriage, had become absolute mistress of her own fortune. Marco Remini had insisted upon that being the case. She desired a confidential domestic, attached to her household, to proceed to the quay and engage the largest and swiftest felucca, with good cabin accommodation, to be ready

for sea, the next day; she then ordered her two female attendants to prepare everything necessary for her and their use, by the following morning.

CHAPTER V.

ANDREA SERRI was the name of the Countess Remini's principal attendant. He was a man of good appearance, good education, and devotedly attached to the person of his former master, Count Remini, who knowing his excellent qualities, his daring and devoted character, handed him over to the service of the Countess the day previous to his marriage, telling her she might depend on his fidelity and bravery in any case of necessity; and that she might place every confidence in

him, should such confidence be required during his absence.

The Countess therefore at once informed Andrea Serri of the contents of Tomasso Franchi's letter. The rage of Andrea, who knew Franchi in his real character, was great, but he did not permit the Countess to see it, neither did he let her know that the said Franchi was a notorious brigand and assassin, for fear of creating in her breast greater inquietude concerning her husband.

He was desired by the Countess to get an iron casket to contain the gold, and to look out for a felucca, but to keep secret both the object of their voyage and the treasure they carried.

Now, it unfortunately happened that in the household of the Countess was a man named Antonio Larchi, of a prying, inquisitive disposition, and at heart wicked. He was desperately enamoured of the same maiden Tomasso Franchi had conceived a passion for,

but was equally unsuccessful in his suit, for the girl was in reality attached to a much more deserving person, that person being Andrea Serri. Larchi suspecting something was going on, by the agitation of the Countess and the orders to the two female attendants to pack things for a voyage, continued to watch Andrea Serri and to overhear the conversation he had with the Countess. The twenty thousand crowns of gold to be taken to Corsica for a ransom, amazed, and for a moment bewildered him. The instant after, his plotting brain conceived the idea that it was possible he might obtain possession of part of this treasure.

Andrea Serri, unfortunately, also was deceived in this man's character, and as he was to select four domestics, all to be well armed, to accompany his mistress, he chose Antonio Larchi as one of the four; and as he had several important things to do before departure, he called Antonio into his room, and

desired him to go down to the Porte del Mari, and hire the finest and fastest felucca then in port, for the voyage to Bastia.

"Madonna!" exclaimed Antonio, as he turned down to the sea gate, "if my uncle is only in port, I am a made man. *Corpo de Bacco*! twenty thousand crowns* in gold!—it's a fabulous sum."

As soon as he got upon the quay, he anxiously enquired of a waterman if the red felucca, the "Santa Catarina," was in port.

"*Cospetto*! *comrade;* go the end of the quay, and you will see her furling her sails. She has just anchored."

"*Ah*! *amici*, that is good news. I have a capital freight for the *capitanio*. Put me aboard, and there's half a dollar."

"You pay well; now jump into my boat, and in ten minutes I will put you aboard. The 'Santa Catarina' is in ballast; she is just

* About ten thousand sterling.

returned from Leghorn, with passengers only."

In ten minutes Antonio was alongside the "Santa Catarina;" he told the boatman to wait. He remained about a quarter of an hour in the cabin of the felucca, in conversation with his worthy uncle, the skipper, and then returned with the waterman to the quay. Exulting in his good fortune, he gave the waterman another half dollar, and hastened back to the Morisini Palace.

In the evening Andrea Serri questioned Larchi as to his mission.

"Luckily," returned Antonio, "I found a remarkably handsome felucca—the largest and the best in port, with a fine cabin and a skilful skipper; everything will be ready for the Countess to embark to-morrow. The 'Santa Catarina' will be alongside the arsenal pier ready by twelve o'clock next day."

Andrea Serri had everything the Countess required taken on board and stowed away.

He liked the appearance of the vessel, praised the commodities of the cabin, and drank a glass of wine with the skipper, who made himself exceedingly agreeable.

The Countess, after a most affectionate leave-taking of the Marchesa Morisini, who was confined to her room from indisposition, and of her dear friend Julia, who would have accompanied her but for her mother's illness, proceeded on board.

Immediately the felucca cast loose from the pier, and unfurled her lofty sails, she rapidly gathered way, and under a strong breeze from the north, soon receded from the pier.

"What a strange effect these blood-red sails have," observed the Countess to her favourite attendants. "I do not like them. White canvas is much more pleasing to the eye."

"I do not like them either, my lady," returned the maid; "the colour is ominous."

"We must not fancy anything ominous,

Anna, in the colour of a vessel's sails. It is a clean vessel, and has a good cabin, and please God, with such a strong, favourable breeze—quite a gale—we shall only want accommodation for one night. I would rather stay on deck if I could, for I very much doubt my sea-going qualities, but it is raw and cold."

It was about the tenth of March, and the season somewhat cold and boisterous for the time of year in the Mediterranean. Having passed the west pier, the "Santa Catarina," staggering under her huge sails, stood right away for Cape Corso, distant about one hundred miles. The red felucca was sailing at the rate of ten knots, so that there was every probability of their reaching Bastia in twelve hours, for at that time of year the *tramontane* blows with violence, and oftentimes with great fury, till, reaching Corsica, when it loses a portion of its violence.

Not wishing to seek the cabin till necessity

compelled them, the Countess and her female attendants remained seated upon deck. The crew of the xebecque consisted of six men, one boy, and the skipper ; the latter we have already described. When about twenty miles from the harbour of Genoa, the sea began, as they thus receded from the land, to be felt considerably, especially as there was a cross swell, and the immense yards of the felucca, so ponderous and lofty, heeled the vessel over considerably, as she felt the swell under her.

The skipper about this time approached the Countess, and doffing his cap, said, with a very humble obeisance, "Your ladyship will, I trust, pardon me for a liberty I have taken, as you have hired this vessel for your own private use, and have paid a munificent price for her—"

"Pray," interrupted the Countess, not exactly liking the skipper's countenance, or his

manner, "what liberty do you speak of? for I do not complain of anything."

"Signora, I hope you will not have to complain," returned the padrone, "but the fact is, without your permission, I have taken on board some twelve or thirteen unfortunate Corsicans, who were in fear of their lives in Genoa. I therefore ventured to take them with the intention of landing them near Cape Corso, which will not delay your ladyship one hour."

The Countess looked indignant.

"What!" said she, "after the last proclamation of the senate, that anyone harbouring or giving shelter to a Corsican, any captain of a ship granting them a passage, should not only forfeit ship and cargo, but be subject to imprisonment, or condemnation to the galleys."

"And yet, Countess," said the padrone, with a singular smile, "I incurred all that

risk to save a countryman. The Count Remini gave home and protection to a cousin of mine, Tomasso Franchi, and yet—"

"What!" exclaimed the Countess, starting, and turning now more pale than before. "Tomasso Franchi a cousin of yours? How is this? are you Corsican?"

"My mother was a Corsican Countess, and my grandfather also; I am a Genoese, as my father was before me; therefore, my lady, you would not have me betray Corsicans into the power of the Genoese government."

"But where are these Corsicans? I do not wish to see anyone suffer, for being simply a native of Corsica."

"They are concealed in the hold, my lady; I will now let them upon deck." And calling two of his men, without another word, they lifted off the bar and raised one of the main hatches, and at once fourteen able-bodied men sprung up from below, exclaim-

ing "*Corpo di Bacco*! *padrone*, it was time to release us; we are half-suffocated."

As the men walked forward in a body, Andrea Serri and the domestics of the Countess, all well armed, came aft, and Andrea said, looking exceedingly agitated and uneasy—

"What has this villanous skipper said, my lady, to account for the appearance of these ruffianly-looking men?"

"He says," returned the Countess, becoming really alarmed, "that they are fugitive Corsicans he is going to land at the Cape, and that he himself is a cousin of Tomasso Franchi."

"Pardon me, my lady, the *padrone* of this craft is a liar and a traitor; the men who came up from the hold are not Corsicans."

"*Madonna*! Andrea Serri, you frighten me." She thought of the twenty thousand crowns of gold in the cabin, and her alarm increased.

"But why do you, on so short an inspection, say that these men are not Corsicans?"

"Because, Countess," said Andrea, in a low voice—"because amongst them I recognised two faces, both felons—escaped Galerians."

"*Madre di Dio*!" exclaimed the Countess, clasping her hands, "we are lost. Oh! Marco, my beloved husband, in my effort to serve you, we are separated for ever."

"Nay, madame, do not imagine that; here are five men devoted to your service, and who will die a hundred deaths before those villains can effect their purpose. You are ill; pray be composed, and retire to your cabin. These ruffians, though they outnumber us, appear unarmed."

Overpowered by sickness, the agitated Countess and her two horrified attendants retired to the cabin.

Andrea and the four domestics gathered together on the after deck; they had partly

overheard the conversation between him and the Countess, and were considerably agitated.

"How," said one of them—"how do you know that two of those men forward are Galerians?"

"I will tell you, Jacomo. Before I entered the Count Remini's service, I was a marine in the 'San Joseph.' Afterwards I served in the same ship as my master, the Count, and for some slight service I rendered him in a fierce conflict, he procured me a confidential situation in the arsenal; there I had occasionally to visit the Bagnio. The two men forward I can swear to having seen there; they were condemned to forty-one years' slavery at the galleys for an atrocious assassination. I remarked them, for they were desperately unruly characters. The Count Remini, just before his marriage, took me from the arsenal and told me he would place me in the service of his intended bride, in a confidential post; thus, when those

ruffians came out of the hold, I passed, and instantly recognised them. They started and turned their faces away, but not before I was sure of my suspicion being correct. The *padrone* of this felucca is a villain, but how he has come to know that we carry a treasure with us, amazes me; that he does so, is certain, and to possess it he shipped these wretches ; and if we be not steady and cool, they will murder us and destroy the Countess and her women."

"*Santa Madonna*! we have fearful odds to contend against."

As Andrea Serri was drawing his pistol to see to the priming, Antonio Larchi, a coward as well as a villain, stood trembling and pale as death. Watching his opportunity, he stole away from his comrades, and then, bounding forwards, rushed on and joined the excited group on the forecastle.

"Ah! *Corpo di Judas*! there is the

traitor," exclaimed Andrea, stamping from rage upon the deck. "Look to your pistols; quick, the priming may have been tampered with."

So it proved. But drawing the charges they quickly reloaded their weapons, whilst a violent altercation was going on forward. The man at the helm, a young and good-looking youth, who had heard every word said by Andrea to his comrades said, in a low voice,

"I am innocent, I am not one of the gang; I refused to join, and there are two others, who only support through fear. Ah! signor, we are lost; they are gone down to the cabin for arms."

At this time the red felucca was going with flowing sheets before the gale, for gale it was, but directly in their favour, the helmsman trembling with fear, but steering steadily. Andrea gazed over the waters that foamed

and broke around them, the felucca's immense yards bending fearfully with the strain—not a vessel in sight. The men came up from the fore cabin, each armed with the long Genoese poignard; but fire arms not one seemed to possess, except the skipper, who had a belt round his waist, with a brace of pistols in it, and carried a cutlass in his hand. Walking coolly aft, he came up to where Andrea Serri stood, with his three brave and determined comrades. Andrea regarded the skipper sturdily as he came quite close, and placing the point of his cutlass in the deck, said,

"Signor Serri, let us understand one another. You can scarcely be so mad as to offer resistance to fourteen armed and determined men, who know you have twenty thousand crowns of gold in a casket in the cabin. I do not want to kill anybody on board this felucca, but I want the crowns of gold. If you surrender the casket quietly, I give you my

solemn oath no one shall be harmed. The Countess and all her attendants shall be safely landed in the Bay of Oleano. If you offer resistance, you will surely be slain, and I dare say you can well imagine the fate of the Countess, in the power of men whose hands are dyed in blood.

"Accursed villain!" returned Andrea, stung to the quick by the cool assurance of the skipper, "take your share of the treasure in lead," and quick as thought he pulled a pistol from his belt, and fired right at the skipper's heart. The *padrone* saw, too late, the action of Andrea's hand. He started back, placed his hand in his belt, and then reeled over against the lee bulwarks, mortally wounded.

The vessel instantly was struck by a heavy sea on the starboard quarter, which caused her to heel over in a cross swell, just as the skipper staggered across the deck, and in an

instant he was cast into the boiling sea. One wild despairing cry mingled with the noise of the breaking seas and the roar of the blast, and the waves closed over the victim for ever.

CHAPTER VI.

The daring act of Andrea Serri, and the sudden and appalling fate of the skipper, the chief conspirator, for a moment paralysed the gang of villains congregated about the windlass. The young sailor at the helm, as he beheld the *padrone* hurled into the foaming sea, through which the felucca, overpressed with canvass, madly urged her way, in his terror and amazement let go the tiller-ropes, and rushed to the side of Andrea Serri, exclaiming, "We are lost."

Andrea had no time or inclination to listen

to the terrified sailor, for the vessel thus suddenly abandoned to her own guidance, broached to. Instantly, her ponderous lateen yard, pressed by a fierce gust, swung round, bent like a bow, and then snapped in two carrying away mast and all with a crash, that threatened to submerge the felucca in the raging sea. This was the work of a few moments. Maddened by the loss of their skipper, and infuriated and excited by the very storm itself, and the crippled state of their vessel, the gang, with loud cries and vociferations, and brandishing their long poignards, made a rush across the slippery deck, intending to overpower Andrea and his comrades, and annihilate them at once. But Andrea Serri, desiring his companions to be cool, stand firm and fire steady, the ruffians were met with a volley from all their pistols which stretched three of their number dead upon the deck and wounded two others. This checked their advance. Of the two prin-

cipal actors, the galley slaves, one fell dead, and the other was mortally wounded.

The rolling and pitching of the felucca, the flapping and splitting of her immense mainsail, the roar of the gale, rapidly increasing to a hurricane, bewildered and completely staggered the conspirators. Antonio Larchi lay wounded on the deck, over which the sea broke in sheets.

"Now, my lads," said Serri, "down the companion stairs, and reload. They will scarcely attempt to attack us below; they are cowed already."

Down the stairs Andrea and his brave companions sprang, whilst two of the felucca's crew, seeing the perilous position of the vessel, dashed past the companion, contrived to seize the tiller, and succeeded in getting the vessel before the gale; the rest of the gang then assembled aft, and held a consultation how next to proceed.

In the meantime the Countess and her

attendants were suffering not only the horrors of sea-sickness, but fearfully apprehensive as to what was going on on deck. The heavy plunges and rolls of the felucca, the roar of the gale, and then the crash of the yard and the fall of the mast drowned all other sounds. Their desperate situation banished, for the time, their sickness, and when Andrea Serri his comrades and the young sailor rushed down the companion stairs, the Countess came to the cabin door, and opening it, and holding on, called Andrea Serri to her side. There was a tolerable open space between the cabin door and the stairs, and in this space, between the main cabin and the cabin of the late *padrone's* mate, Andrea and his comrades were fortifying themselves, so as to make a desperate resistance when attacked. Fortunately the felucca had no skylight—the cabin was lighted by bull's-eyes in the deck, and two small windows in the stern. These windows were, however, secured by shutters

let in, like the port holes in vessels of war. These were closed to keep out the dash of the sea against the stern, so that the cabin at this hour was nearly dark.

With tolerable firmness, the Countess demanded of Andrea Serri the particulars of what had occurred on deck.

"Thanks to St. Nicholas, my lady, the miscreants have done us no mischief as yet. Neither do I think it is in their power. We owe our preservation to Providence and this tempest of wind. The critical situation of the felucca, and the death of their rascally *padrone* paralysed them for a moment."

"How!" exclaimed the Countess, amazed. "The skipper dead? Ah! the mast fell upon him, perhaps?"

"No, my lady, I shot the traitor, and a lurch the vessel gave pitched him overboard, and there he met a better fate than he deserved."

"*Madre mia*! what a death," said the

Countess, shuddering. "You are a brave and faithful follower, Andrea Serri, and if it pleases God that we are delivered from this peril, I hope to show my gratitude."

"Do not fear, my lady; we shall, with God's blessing, subdue these ruffians yet."

"Hark!" exclaimed the Countess, staggering, and thrown on her knees by the violent plunge which the felucca gave, so violent that Andrea and his companions were dashed against the partition.

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed the young sailor, "it's a hurricane."

"Ah!" said the Countess, throwing herself upon a sofa, and grasping it firmly, while her two attendants shrieked with fear, for the crash that ensued, and the fearful roar of the blast as it thundered over the felucca, and bent her gunwale under, was terrible. "Ah! *Madonna*!" murmured the Countess, "there is an enemy that will conquer all."

Andrea and his comrades staggered up the

stairs and regained the deck. They thought the felucca was foundering, for a deluge of water was dashed down through the open companion. All thought of contention with the conspirators was banished in that moment of supposed doom.

On gaining the deck they perceived that the felucca was nearly on her beam ends, that the main yard and mast lay broken and shattered across the deck, and that the crew were paralysed. The landsmen had rushed down into the fore cabin in wild terror. Andrea Serri had served in a man of war, and, though not a sailor, he very well knew what was to be done. He called upon the crew to take axes and cut away the wreck, whilst he and the young sailor, with some difficulty seized the tiller, and when freed from the wreck of mast, yard, and sail, the stricken bark rose again to the sea, and, like a scared sea bird, dashed forward bravely before the furious tempest.

As night closed upon them, they secured the remarkably fine long-boat the felucca carried between her masts. Silently, but sullenly, the crew of the felucca performed their work. Two of their number sided with Andrea, and one had been swept overboard and drowned. They, therefore, perceived that without the aid of the cowardly wretches in the fore cabin, they were the weakest; but Andrea Serri and his now increased force felt little fear of the rest, though there still remained eleven desperadoes in combination.

Those in the fore cabin, when their terrors subsided, and guessing by the comparatively easy motion of the vessel that their peril of foundering was over, began abusing each other for their folly in rushing below, where they would have been drowned, like blind kittens —cursing their ill luck, and pouring maledictions on the head of the defunct *padrone* for placing himself within the reach of Andrea

Serri's pistol, and for leaving Genoa without providing firearms.

"You forget," interrupted one named Gandula, one also escaped from the bagnio, "it was impossible at the time to procure fire arms and ammunition; they could not be smuggled on board, and to take them openly through the Porte del Mari was out of the question. Our escape from the bagnio had roused the authorities. But what's to be done? The rest of the crew have, no doubt, been bought over."

"Not they," returned another; "two, I know, joined us sulkily; but there are still eleven or twelve of us."

"Curse them!" exclaimed one desperado; "let us set fire to the craft, and burn them all."

"Fool!" retorted another, "is burning so pleasant, that you wish to try it?"

"I am no fool," returned the other,

savagely, "but I will have revenge on that villain Serri, he not only killed the skipper, but also my brother, and that fellow Larchi is, I am sure, mortally wounded."

"*Patienza*!" said a tall, strong, powerful looking ruffian. "We'll gain the day yet, if you are cool."

"Cool! why, *Diavolo*! do you expect miracles?" gruffly said another of the men; "don't you know that we are dismasted, and that before four hours are over, we shall be driven upon the Corsican coast, and this craft knocked to rags?— and even if we escape with life, the Corsican rebels will shoot or hang us. Cool! *per Christo!* You'll be cool enough this time to-morrow."

In the meantime, Andrea Serri, leaving the tiller to the care of the two sailors, in their interest,and his three comrades on guard, descended to the cabin, and after some trouble contrived to light the lamp suspended from the ceiling of the cabin. The motion of the

felucca was so violent in the tremendous sea then urging the dismasted craft over their breaking crests, that neither the Countess nor her attendants could keep their feet.

Andrea informed his anxious mistress that all danger from the gang of miscreants was over; he also informed her that her treacherous attendant, Antonio Larchi, was mortally wounded; they had carried him below, and bound up his wound as well as they could. The miserable man bitterly repented his treason, confessing he was actuated as much by the desire of obtaining the person of the Countess's attendant as his love of gold. His share was to be the girl and a thousand crowns.

"Unfortunate, misguided man!" said the Countess, "he has paid the penalty of crime; but do you think it possible that this vessel will survive the night in this pitiless storm, and where, if she does, shall we be driven?"

"As we run now right before the gale," returned Andrea, "we shall undoubtedly run

upon the west coast of Corsica. It is to be hoped we shall have daylight before we make the coast, and be able to enter some bay or gulf, and anchor in safety. But I am thinking, if the gale moderates, we may be able to get some kind of sail on the stump of the foremast, and so to keep out to sea till we get assistance from some passing vessel."

"Oh, *Madonna*! undoubtedly," said the Countess, eagerly; "if we are driven on the Corsican coast, we shall become prisoners, and all hope of releasing the Count from captivity be at an end. I tremble to think of his being in the power of that bold, bad man, Tomasso Franchi."

Before returning to the deck, Andrea sought amidst the provisions for wine, and prevailed upon the Countess and her maids to take some, with a little bread. Gladly they acceded to his wishes, and then seeing his charges refreshed, he put a couple of bottles in his pocket, for himself and comrades, and

returned upon deck, excessively uneasy at their critical situation. Midnight came, with a clear sky and a strong steady gale; there were at that time no signs of land.

Descending into the hold, he visited the wretched victim of his own wicked projects, Antonio Larchi, who was propped up in a boarded space in the hold. He had been shot in the chest, and suffered terribly. A mug of wine was given him, one of the Countess's attendants holding a light.

"I shall die!" said Antonio, in a weak voice. "I know there is no help, and I know I deserve my fate, but I never thought that my cousin, the skipper, would employ such villains as escaped galerians. My idea was, that the Countess and all of you, excepting Anna Celini, would be landed on Capo Corso, but I found out when I came aboard that the intentions of the galerians were horrible. But some have already met the fate they richly deserved, and before long death will release

me from my sufferings, and I trust my sincere repentance, and prayers for mercy, will be heard by a just and merciful God!"

After a time he seemed to revive. Another mug of wine gave him strength to proceed. "You see," continued Larchi, "those villains, the galley slaves, defeated themselves, they were concealed in the hold here, and were not to stir till night set in; and when you were all supposed to be at rest, they could then have murdered you, and seized the Countess and the twenty thousand crowns. But the gale and the motion of the vessel, and being confined in the hold without light and but little air, made them impatient and they insisted on coming upon deck. It was so decreed by Providence, and it saved you all."

Just as Antonio Larchi finished his confession a cry arose from the deck that land was visible on their larboard bow.

Andrea rushed up in a moment, and found all on board, except the females, were holding

on here and there, and gazing out in the direction of the land, which stretched out to an interminable extent to their view.

"We have run past the Cape," said one of the sailors; "and I think we are drifting ashore on the southern side of the Gulf of San Fiorenza. If we strike there we shall go to pieces."

"As we cannot weather yonder head and get out to sea," said one of the sailors, "we had better hoist one of our lugs on the stump of the foremast—there is twenty feet hoist—and try and run in under shelter of the northern shore of the Gulf of San Fiorenza. We shall have smooth water, and we shall be several miles from the town and fortress, and may be able to refit and get to sea, before our vessel is taken any notice of."

This advice Andrea Serri thought very good and very possible. All large lateen rigged vessels carry great lug sails, to hoist when it blows a gale, forcing them to lower their

ponderous and lofty lateen yards upon the deck.

The seven ruffians shipped by the skipper in Genoa, kept by themselves in the fore cabin. The four sailors and the boy left of the felucca's crew, appeared to repent their treacherous conduct, and Andrea promised them, in the name of the Countess, a handsome reward each, if they remained faithful and contrived to get the felucca to sea again, and make the port of Bastia.

Andrea Serri was secretly attached to the Countess's favourite attendant, and she favoured his attentions, and, in fact, engaged herself to him.

They kept their engagement secret, because the Countess would not have taken Anna with her had she known it; for she remembered the disturbance that took place, caused by Tomasso Franchi's passion for the same maiden. Anna was a remarkably pretty and virtuous girl. She could not help the men falling in

love with her. She gave them no encouragement, for her affections were bestowed upon Andrea. Andrea Serri, therefore, besides his devotion to the Countess' person, had his own intended wife to look after as well.

When the sail was set upon the mast, which was broken off some few feet below the head, the felucca was headed in for the Gulf, and after a severe struggle they weathered the head, and were able to make way for the opposite shore, owing to the great in draught of the waters.

Just as the early dawn threw a faint light over the waters of the Gulf the felucca was able, after running some three or four miles up to anchor under a bold and forest clad shore, rising abruptly several hundred feet above the waters of the Gulf.

The wind blew off the land, and the felucca rode quietly at anchor, not a hundred yards from a fine pebbly beach.

As soon as the felucca rode to her anchor

Andrea hurried below to acquaint the Countess of their safety, and his intention to rig up some spars, and before six hours were over he expected they would be able to put to sea again, and as the gale was going down they might yet make Bastia in safety.

The Countess and her attendants had contrived, wrapped in mantles and shawls, to get a couple of hours' sleep, having felt a relief from the terrible anxiety of their previous horrible situation. Their sea sickness had vanished, and the natural strength and vigour of the Countess' mind became restored, and her whole thoughts centered upon her beloved Marco's imprisonment, and the means to be employed to rescue him.

"Should anything occur, Andrea," said the Countess, after some few questions asked and answered, respecting their situation—"should anything occur to prevent our getting out of the Gulf, or you find that we shall not escape being made prisoners, the best plan will be

to secretly drop the casket, with the twenty thousand crowns, through the cabin windows, and let it sink, taking some particular objects on the shore as a mark. This will save the money from falling into the hands of plunderers, and should we become prisoners I feel quite satisfied that any of the great Corsican leaders, such as Paoli, Matri, and Gafiori, would release us, if I stated where the treasure lies, which could be easily recovered by a good diver."

"The plan is an excellent one, my lady. I will unscrew the shutters at once, that you may have air and light."

He had scarcely done so when loud shouts and his name loudly called from above, and the report of several pistols made Andrea turn pale, and then without a word rush upon deck.

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed the two attendants of the Countess, "what new danger is this?"

Wrapping her mantle about her the Countess ran up the companion stairs, and looked out over the deck, where all were gazing out over the bows, looking up the Gulf. She then perceived a long boat pulling rapidly up the Gulf, full of men.

"They are going away from us," thought the Countess. "What has created this alarm and firing?"

Andrea, turning round, saw the Countess, and he came to her, telling her that whilst the crew and his comrades were below getting two heavy spars and some ropes out of the hold the seven villains had come up from the fore cabin and actually contrived to lift the boat over the side, and jumping in pulled rapidly away; they heard the splash in the water and rushed up, but too late; that his comrades fired their pistols after them, and felt sure they had wounded some of the wretches; but they and the boat were gone, and there was no help for it.

"*Madonna*!" said the Countess; "I consider it a happy deliverance."

"Yes, my lady, of the miscreants; but the boat was a large and fine boat, and would have answered to take us round to Bastia. The villains will be made prisoners and betray our situation, and no doubt from vengeance state the amount of gold we have aboard."

"That they may do, certainly," said the Countess, thoughtfully; "but, my God! what means that grey smoke coming out of the fore hatch?"

Andrea turned round with a start; the men were engaged hauling out the spars.

"*Corpo di Bacco*! the villains have set fire to the fore cabin."

As he spoke a tongue of flame burst up through the open hatch, and all, with a wild cry shouted out, "the felucca is on fire," and ran for buckets, and filling them over the side dashed the water down the hatch.

The Countess stood firm and resolute, gazing at the men and earnestly watching their efforts to conquer an element the most horrible and appalling to those who trust their lives on the great deep.

The noise and cries of the men brought up Anna and the elderly attendant of the Countess. They uttered a piercing shriek when they saw that the flames, despite every effort, gained greater power, and were rapidly consuming the deck.

"Do not give way to fear," said the Countess, calmly, "we are not far from shore;" and walking up to Andrea she said, "it is labour in vain, cut her cable and let her drift ashore; the flaws of wind I see blow that way. But come you, and throw the casket out of the cabin window."

"You are right, Countess; we cannot conquer the fire, for the miscreants fired the cabin well before they left," telling the mate

to cut the cable, and urge her ashore with their long sweep.

Andrea ran below, and with the Countess' and Anna's assistance, the heavy casket was dropped out of the stern window. By this time the flames had seized upon the decks, and the cable being cut, two of the men, with the long sweeps, urged her in shore; the rest of the men were employed lashing the hatches across the two spars they got up from the hold. All were quite cool, for there was little or no danger to life--they were so near shore.

This was the first trial that the young Countess Remini had yet gone through, and she bore it with unflinching courage. It was a wild forest-clad shore the blazing felucca was drifting on, fringed with rocks. No human habitation was in sight; the nearest building being the old Fortress of Nonza, perched upon the summit of the lofty height,

full eight hundred feet above them. Andrea took particular note of the spot where they had thrown the casket; he took marks on shore, and felt satisfied an expert diver could easily recover it.

The felucca grounded not sixty yards from the rocks; the fire had gained such power, however, that all on board hastily got either into the water and swam ashore, or clung on to the raft that carried the females and all the articles they required, with a couple of hampers of food and wine. They easily pushed the raft ashore, and, after climbing over sharp rocks, they paused, and settled themselves under the shelter of some fine evergreen oaks on a nice green sward. From where they were it was full ten miles to the town of San Fiorenza, which was hidden from their view by a bend in the land and a bold projecting rocky head.

The Gulf of San Fiorenza is the finest body of water affording shelter to shipping

belonging to Corsica, nearly fifteen miles in length, and from four to five in breadth, with good depth of water; a fleet might manœuvre in it.

CHAPTER VII.

The miscreants who succeeded in making their escape from the felucca, after setting the fore cabin on fire in several places, pulled up the gulf towards San Fiorenza, without any fixed plan in their heads. After rounding the rocky promontory, they could perceive the town of Fiorenza, though distant eight miles, as the sun's rays fell full upon its white walls and houses. They then lay upon their oars to consider how they should proceed.

"If we go into the town," said one, "we

shall be made prisoners at once, and perhaps hung or shot."

"*Cospetto*! I will tell you what is best to do," said another. "Look!" and he pointed to the walls of the fortress of Nonza, which they could just see peeping above the dense wood that covered the side of the hill. "That is the Castle of Nonza our unfortunate skipper spoke of. You know he said, if he could make the Gulf of San Fiorenza, and not be attacked by any armed Corsican vessel from the port of Fiorenza, he could get a large sum of money for the Countess and her attendant from a Colonel Franchi, who held Nonza. This Franchi was a bandit once, and little cared what he did; he would give a large sum for the Countess and her attendant. Now, you see, we can play a good game yet; they are sure to get safe ashore out of the felucca, and when the old craft is burned out, there's an end to her. Let us land here just under the

fortress and climb up to it, and make terms with this Franchi I don't care myself if I join his band."

"*Corpo di Bacco*! you are right, Jacopo. Let us go ashore; we have a chance by doing so, whereas if we go to the town we shall be lodged in prison, and if sent back to Genoa, we shall be hung without shrift."

Having agreed to the proposal of the man named Jacopo, they urged the boat ashore, and, jumping on a fine pebbly beach, fastened the boat to a rock with a rope, and then commenced forcing their way through the thick forest that covered the hill. They had proceeded about a mile or more, when the loud baying of hounds was heard, and simultaneous to those sounds, the cracking and crushing of branches was also distinguished just above them; before they could move, or actually see the cause of the crashing, a huge wild boar, for which the forests of Fiorenza were celebrated, burst right into the

midst of them, upsetting two driving his tusk into a third, and then plunging into a thick brake.

Jacopo Aniola was the man gored by the huge and furious beast. Before his amazed comrades could raise him up, five fine noble looking dogs of the blood-hound breed, dashed through the underwood and scarcely bestowing a look at the men, dashed on with loud cries, after the boar.

Jacopo lay, cursing and groaning with pain; his leg was severely torn. His comrades looked around for the hunters, who soon made their appearance. About ten or twelve men with long boar spears, and well armed besides, came hurrying through the wood, but seeing the Genoese, and knowing at once that they were Genoese, they halted and, unslinging their short carbines, without a word or a moment's hesitation, fired and stretched three of the miserable wretches dead upon the ground. The three remaining villains threw

themselves on their knees praying for mercy, saying that they were not enemies but friends, seeking for Colonel Franchi, of Nonza.

"Oh! the *Diavolo!*" said a tall, strong man, who by his dress and manner appeared the chief of the party. "Why didn't you say so?" and then he laughed heartily as he and his followers drew close to their victims. "*Corpo di Bacco!*" continued the leader, "our shots told well—three dead and one wounded. Come, who the *Diavolo* are you. You are Genoese at all events, however you came to know my name. I'm Colonel Franchi. What have you to say, to prevent my hanging you as spies on these tempting branches?"

"We are not spies," said the miserable wretches, now unexpectedly punished for their atrocious wickedness, and by the very hand they expected to be protected by.

"We were seeking to throw into your

hands a treasure, and with it the Countess Remini and her attendants!"

"*Eh! Santa Madonna!* What is this you say? Am I dreaming, or are you concocting a bundle of lies, to save your necks from the halter," said Tomasso Franchi, with a volley of oaths. "Make haste, you *Maladetto* Genoese, or I shall lose my sport."

In awful trepidation of the ferocious Tomasso Franchi, the fugitives from the felucca stated the particulars of their voyage from Genoa, the death of the *padrone*, and the landing as they supposed of the Countess, after their setting the felucca on fire.

With a frightful oath, Franchi turned to his comrades. "What, comrades, do I hear? These villains, these miscreants, have set fire to a vessel containing twenty thousand crowns in gold. What do they deserve?"

"Hanging! *Corpo di Juda!* hanging, and at once!"

"Then I pronounce sentence: at once hang them."

The terrified victims stood stupified, then threw themselves on their knees, in abject submission, praying for life, saying that they were ready to join his band, to do anything he bade them.

"*Per Christo*! listen to these villains!" exclaimed Franchi, in a furious rage. "Join a band of gentlemen, defenders of their country; the scum of the jails and galleys of Genoa. Up with them, my men—haste—no more time!"

In an incredibly short time, two of the bandit's followers uncurled the bundle of ropes they had carried to suspend the boar, when killed, to a stake. The rest seized the Genoese, who roared, screamed, prayed, and uttered maledictions in the same breath, all in vain. The miscreants who held them, the very refuse of the Corsican jails, bandits and assassins, seemed to delight in the deed. In five minutes, their victims, uttering horrible cries, were swinging from the branches of the

nearest trees, whilst Tomasso Franchi was seated on a rock, coolly lighting his pipe.

"Come," said he, "my lads, this will, I promise you, be a fine morning's hunt. You are getting expert. Those rascals are very well hung, very well indeed. We will now go and have a look for this scornful beauty, the Countess Remini and my ransom of twenty thousand crowns. *Cospetto*! there is some meaning in the old saying, 'It's an ill wind that blows no one any good.' Last night's gale was a God-send. Hum!" laughed the bandit, as he looked at the miserable bodies of the Genoese, swinging within a few inches of the ground. "It was necessary to get them out of the way. This adventure of her ladyship, my haughty Countess, must not reach General Matri's ears. And my pretty Anna, who scorned Tomasso Franchi. Ho! ho! Who's turn is it now to sue?"

Though only the month of March, the weather in Corsica, especially under the shelter

of the high forest-land of Nonza, is extremely mild and beautiful, completely sheltered as it is from the fierce north winds out of the gulf of Genoa. The Countess and her attendants therefore suffered nothing from the weather. The gale, even if it had not moderated, would have little or no effect where they were. Fortunately the miserable misguided Antonio Larchi ceased to exist before the felucca anchored in the gulf.

The Countess had not yet, from the time they left the harbour of Genoa, partaken of any other refreshment than a glass of wine. The basket of provisions was now unpacked and Anna and Andrea Serri placed them upon a cloth, spread upon the dry bank. Andrea and his comrades lit a fire, and also partook of refreshments, so that the entire party, though almost certain in their own minds of being made prisoners, reconciled themselves to this disaster with tolerable resignation. The day was remarkably

fine, the sky clear, and a blaze of sunshine gave warmth and life to the still scene around them. Andrea Serri and some of his comrades determined to have a search for a boat; the former thinking if they could seize a fishing boat, they might get round the Cape to Bastia.

After their departure, the Countess, reclining against a rock, became plunged into a serious train of thought, from which she was suddenly startled by the loud barking of hounds from the forest. All gathered in a group, the Countess starting to her feet, her heart beating rapidly, she guessed the crisis of her fate had now come, for the hounds betokened the approach of Corsican hunters.

"If," said Monimia, to herself, "these should be any followers of that bandit Franchi, for we cannot be far from Nonza, which he holds, and where doubtless my beloved Marco lingers in captivity, I tremble for our fate."

On came the sounds of the hounds, and with them the loud shouts of excited men, and then the wild boar with the dogs upon him, came rolling down the steep bank, and a terrible struggle ensued between the hunted beast and his pursuers.

"Keep quiet, men," said the Countess, seeing her followers snatch up their arms, "resistance would be a folly. Ah! Andrea is away!"

The next moment, Tomasso Franchi and his followers sprang down the bank, and despatched the savage of the woods with their long boar spears.

Tomasso Franchi then advanced, and removing his Corsican bonnet, with its single feather, said, with more of mockery and malice than aught else. "You are welcome, Countess Remini, to Corsica; doubtless you remember your humble servant," and he replaced his bonnet, staring with a fierce exulting glance into the horrified features of Anna.

The Countess looked into the harsh fierce features of the bandit, with haughty contempt expressed in every line of her noble countenance.

"Yes, Tomasso Franchi!"

"Colonel Franchi," coolly interrupted the Corsican. "I received my rank from General Matri himself."

"Then," said the Countess, "the General very little knew on whom he bestowed such rank."

The colour mounted into the bandit's cheek, and his eyes flashed with the passion he felt.

"You forget," he exclaimed, "that your husband is my prisoner, and that now fortune has thrown his wife into my hands, or you would be less free, with your sarcasms. I am not a man likely to be played with. I have already shot and hung the rascals who had the audacity to fire the vessel that brought you here." The Countess shuddered.

"Where, Madame, is the ransom of twenty thousand crowns. You surely did not leave it in the sunken felucca, neither do I see your attendant, Andrea Serri; I have an account to settle with him."

"I shall answer no question of yours, Tomasso Franchi," said the Countess, with great firmness, "I demand, as a prisoner of rank, to be delivered over to the protection of General Matri, who is now in San Fiorenza, and will soon know you hold me and my husband prisoners; and take care how your own private views induce you to act, for justice and honourable treatment of prisoners are to be had from such leaders as Paoli and General Matri."

Tomasso Franchi cast a look of rage at the Countess. Of all men he feared Matri, who was then at Fiorenza, and intending a visit to the Capo to restore order, and see to its defences. He was well aware that if General

Matri knew of the Countess's misfortune, he would immediately send an escort and boats to take her to San Fiorenza, and treat her with every courtesy; and he also knew that when the General visited the Capo and heard of his cruel deeds and the wanton acts of spoliation he had committed, he would have to surrender the fortress and his rank of Colonel. Dissembling the furious rage that filled his breast, Tomasso Franchi said, speaking with apparent mildness,

"Madame the Countess need not fear ill-treatment at my hands. Your husband was taken prisoner with arms in his hands, after killing two of my followers, and wounding several more; I should have been justified in warfare if I had shot him as a spy."

The Countess's cheek blanched, and then flushed, and her eyes sparkled as she indignantly said, "How dare you, Tomasso Franchi, couple the name of the noble Count

Remini with that of a spy! Genoa is at war with the insurgent Corsicans, to recover her rights. If the Count Remini was taken with arms in his hands, he has still the right to be considered simply a prisoner of war. You forget, Tomasso Franchi," she added, bitterly, "when you fled from Corsica, to avoid the vengeance of your own countrymen, accused as a bandit and an assassin, the Count Remini gave you the protection of his roof, and shielded you from a fate you say you have just inflicted upon the wretches who have thus thrown me into your hands. Release my husband, restore him and me and my attendants even into the hands of General Matri, and I promise you the twenty thousand crowns shall yet be yours, and no word of complaint escape my lips of your conduct to your chief."

Tomasso Franchi now saw he must play the bandit without any concealment. Had

he held the Count Remini prisoner, which he did not, he would have leaped at the Countess's proposal. He now resolved to force the Countess and her attendants to accompany him to Nonza, there by threats and other means learn where the twenty thousand crowns were hid, for he firmly believed that they had buried them somewhere not very distant from where they were. He therefore said, harshly,

"There is no use, Countess, in bandying words. You and your attendants are in my power; you must accompany me to Nonza. When there we will negotiate for these twenty thousand crowns, but unless I hold them in my possession, neither you nor your husband shall ever quit the walls of Nonza!"

Making a signal to his armed attendants, they were about to surround the Countess and her faithful attendants, who were prepared to sacrifice their lives in her defence, when an

event occurred that completely changed the position of the two parties. We must, however, return in our next chapter to the Count Remini and his attendant, Phillipo.

CHAPTER VIII.

We left the Count Remini and his attendant, Phillipo, entering the habitation of Pasquale Rossi. As soon as they got inside, the Corsican, after carefully looking on every side, closed the door.

"Now what on earth, my good lord, can have tempted you to incur this great risk of captivity, perhaps death?"

"Why, you seem, my good friend Pasquale," returned the Count, very quietly taking up some boiled chestnuts, "to magnify a very trifling risk into startling dimensions.

You forget I am well acquainted with the Corsican dialect, and am not so unlike a Corsican as to attract very particular attention during the two or three hours I intend to remain. Why, Marguerita! you look pale and frightened! Sooner than cause you uneasiness, I will return to my vessel." This sentence he addressed to the very pretty sister of Pasquale Rossi.

"Ah! Signor," said the young girl, anxiously. "You do not know who is so near you."

"But my dear Count," interrupted Rossi, whilst Phillipo, who was extremely hungry after the fatigue of the ascent from the beach, was diligently helping himself to the fare that smoked upon the table. "For what purpose have you landed from your vessel, and where do you propose going?"

"Not a yard further," replied the Count, "than where I am. The simple fact is, I sailed from Bastia, with fifty followers, to try

and rescue my brother-in-law, the Count Carignano, and his spouse my sister, from captivity, knowing that they were shut up in the town of Fornalle. It was and is quite possible to rescue them by sea."

"No, my lord, it is not," interrupted Rossi, "for three days ago, the Count and his brave little band, half starved and without ammunition, surrendered to General Matri's lieutenant."

"*Ah*! *Madonna*!" exclaimed the Count, "but for the selfishness and supineness of the old governor of Bastia, I could, with the 'Prima,' have easily relieved the brave garrison of San Fiorenza. But, my old friend," continued the Count, "I forget that you, as a Corsican, must feel rejoiced at the success that attends the arms of your countrymen."

"Yes, my lord, of course I do. I have fought under the banners of the great and good Paoli, and acting according to his views, I have foresworn to give up for ever the

vendetta between our family and the Franchi, as the General is determined to put an end to that sanguinary institution; and, moreover, he declares if the said Tomasso Franchi attempts to resume the *vendetta* on his part, he will have him, and any of his kin joining him, tried for murder."

"A very just and wholesome decision," said the Count. "Individually, I do not regret the chance you Corsicans have of recovering your liberty, though I fear the French will step in, when Genoa fails, and rob you of your well merited freedom."

"I have thought of that, my lord. Ah! had all Genoese noblemen acted as your noble family have always done, this insurrection and determined effort to regain our liberties, would most probably never have taken place. But indeed, my good lord, you had better return to your vessel at once. Tomasso Franchi, since his return, is just as ferocious a bandit as ever; he and his blood-thirsty

band are abhorred throughout the Capo, and I feel quite satisfied when General Matri comes to have a knowledge of his atrocities, he will have to pay the penalty of his crimes. He gained possession of your fortress of Nonza by the vilest treachery, putting a brave Genoese captain and his little garrison to the sword."

"But, St. Nicholas!" exclaimed Marco Remini, indignantly. "How is it that your leaders, men of name, and rank, and high character, will not only tolerate such ruffians, but even grant them the title of Colonel?"

"You see, my lord, neither Paoli nor even Matri are yet cognisant of his acts. In the confusion of a first rising throughout the country, this Tomasso Franchi, on returning from Genoa, succeeded in gathering together some hundreds of his old associates, and all bandits from the mountains. You are aware, Count Remini, that Genoa did the same; she pardoned all her outlaws, assassins, and

thieves, provided they would serve in the war against the Corsicans. This Franchi does not want courage: he has the courage of a wild beast. At the head of his ruffians he performed one or two seemingly daring acts, the treachery of which was overlooked. Owing to the desperate state of the contest, he got nominated Colonel, marched into the Capo, and as I told you, took Nonza by treachery. But it is time you should be moving, after partaking of the best I can put before you."

"Well, as I have ample time to reach my vessel before dark, I will accept of your hospitality, and have a little chat with your good wife, and my old companion, your pretty sister, Marguerita, who, no doubt, remembers how we used to romp through the old halls and chambers of Nonza."

Marguerita smiled and blushed, as the Count sat down beside her, whilst Pasquale Rossi's handsome wife placed everything she could think of on the table before him.

"I will keep watch," said Pasquale Rossi, "for I still am uneasy."

He advanced to the door, and went out; but almost immediately returned, extremely agitated,

"By all the saints! my lord, you are betrayed; here is a body of that bandit Franchi's troop surrounding the house."

Marco Remini and Phillipo sprung to their feet, and grasped their carbines.

"Oh! my lord!" exclaimed Marguerita, "make no resistance. *Madonna*! they would slay you."

"Yes," said Pasquale Rossi, "my sister is right; give yourself up, and I will set out at once for Fiorenza, and claim General Matri's protection."

As he spoke, the door was forced open, and Franchi's Lieutenant and a dozen men endeavoured to enter.

Marco Remini stood, leaning on his carbine, gazing steadily and unmoved into the bold fierce countenance of Franchi's Lieutenant.

"I come by the orders of Colonel Franchi," said the Lieutenant, raising his eyes to the noble person of the Count, "to arrest you, the Count Remini, your attendant, and also you, Pasquale Rossi, for harbouring Genoese spies under your roof."

"Rascal! do you dare to call me a spy!" returned the Count, striding up to within a yard of the powerful ruffian.

"Aye, *per Cristo*!" returned the Lieutenant, "and to arrest you as such;" and, at the same instant, he made a grasp at the Count's throat; but Marco Remini, as active as he was powerful, sprang back, and swinging his carbine, brought the villain to the ground, whilst Phillipo shot the man beside him dead. In an instant every ruffian within the room was thrown out by the three powerful men within, pistol shots and blows falling thick and fast.

"The die is cast," said Pasquale Rossi, piling every available article against the doors, Marguerita eagerly aiding.

"Now let us to the wood," said Pasquale, "through this back door. Aye, aye! thunder away, you bandits!" he exclaimed, as they strove to burst in the door with the butts of their muskets. "Now, follow me, my lord; we have nothing for it but flight. They cannot get round to us except by a considerable circuit."

"Let us make for the bay of Oleano," said Marco Remini; "I have brought you into trouble, Rossi."

"And you, Marguerita, go with my wife to Caraffa's, and come to the Cave to-night; you understand?"

"Yes, yes," returned the spirited girl, "I will not fail; I will raise the Cape before the villains shall make you prisoners."

"Hark! they are getting desperate—this way."

In five minutes they were plunged amid the intricacies of a dense wood.

"You cannot, my lord, make for Oleano Bay by daylight, for, in crossing the Osmanca,

you would be seen; and, besides, you may depend, the path will be well watched. I have a certain place of safety for you, that even Franchi's blood hounds will fail to find."

On through the dense entangled wood the three strong men pushed their way, and down a deep descent.

This part of the Cape Corsica, and on which stands the remains of the once celebrated Fortress of Nonza, is almost impregnable, from its wild and rugged forest heights and precipices, immense crags, and precipitous descents, leading down to the shores of the Gulf of Fiorenza on one side, and to the Bay of Oleano on the other. They could hear the shouts and cries of their pursuers; but none of the followers of Tomasso Franchi were men of the Cape; they knew little about the intricate passes through its forests and defiles; and knowing how they were detested by the men of the Cape, and how

loved the family of Rossi were, they feared to trust themselves, except in great force, amid the depths of the forest; consequently their pursuit was slack, and soon abandoned. Neither did they venture to burn or plunder the farm house of Pasquale. They were, after all, but a small body of men to resist the peasants around, if inclined to rise against them.

Led by Pasquale Rossi, our hero and Phillipo soon came to the edge of a precipice, some three hundred feet deep, without shrub or tree clinging to its precipitous sides.

"Now, my good lord," said Rossi, "I remember you a few years ago possessed uncommon nerve and activity; you must now exert it, for we must descend this cliff for two hundred yards."

"Holy Paul!" ejaculated Phillipo, gazing down the fearful steep, "I do not see even a ledge for a goat."

"Nevertheless, my good Phillipo, we must

make one, for our pursuers are not very far behind. You have strength, and courage, and nerve. Now lead on, Pasquale."

The Corsican led to a spot, and then leaped down on a ledge, scarcely a foot in width—a false step, and certain destruction would follow. But Rossi was followed along the dangerous ledge by two men who knew no fear. From one ledge to another, with sundry daring leaps, they, at last, reached a kind of shelf. The perspiration poured from their foreheads with the terrible exertion.

"By the powers! Signor Rossi," said Phillipo, "I see it's possible to come down; but no man living could go back over the same ground."

"You are right, *amico*," returned the Corsican. "I never knew one that ever attempted it—and not two besides ourselves that have dared the descent. However, here we are, our journey is over. You see, where we

stand, we are invisible to anyone on the summit, for the summit projects over us. I have given you a hard task, my lord," continued Pasquale, wiping his forehead; "but, by my faith, I would not like to distance you another hundred yards. Your follower surprises me even more, for you were accustomed to our wild glens and precipices."

"I have some recollection of this remarkable precipice," said the Count; "but now we are here, what next?"

"Just follow me round this abrupt angle of rock, and you will see."

Holding on by the rocks, and keeping firm footing on the crumbling ledge they stood on, they came to a wide gap in the face of the cliff. Into this gap Pasquale Rossi pushed himself; the Count and his attendant followed, and suddenly found themselves in a vast and lofty cavern, lighted by several large fissures in the cliffs.

The cavern was full fifty feet long, and thirty feet high. They all three now sat down on the rocks to rest themselves.

"You see, my lord," said Pasquale, "that even Franchi's bloodhounds could track us no further than the edge of the cliff above us; they would be dashed to pieces if they attempted to follow the scent."

"I agree with you there, Rossi," said the Count; "but it's a mystery to me how I was discovered."

"It is very clear to me," returned Pasquale, "that you were watched and tracked, from the landing in Oleano Bay, to my cottage; but how your name and rank became known to Franchi's bandits is a mystery."

"When night sets in," said the Count, "I must, nevertheless, try and make my way back to the boat in Oleano Bay. My Lieutenant will not put to sea before to-morrow. I told him, should I not return by evening, when the gale moderated, to run along

shore, keeping at a short distance, so as to observe signals."

"Well, my lord, we will make the attempt to reach the zebecque as soon as it is sufficiently dark."

"I cannot understand, Pasquale," observed the Count, "how we are to get out of this place. I heard you tell Marguerita to come to some cave or other; but you surely never meant this, for down the way we came, no maiden could dream of venturing."

"Certainly not, Count; though a bold and resolute girl, that feat is beyond her powers. But wait awhile, you will then see what a wonderful range of caverns exists in these hills; caverns a profound secret to all in the Capo."

"But how came you, Rossi, to discover these extraordinary caverns?"

"There is a tradition, my lord, existing amongst the people of the Capo, that the mountain beneath Nonza contained wonder-

ful caverns, in which the early inhabitants of the Capo sought shelter when the Island of Corsica was overrun by the Goths, who massacred ten thousand of them. Nevertheless, they failed in reducing the men of the Capo. Tradition states that they carried their goods and cattle into some marvellous caves, sallying forth here and there, and slaying their invaders, till at last the Goths were driven out by the Saracens. Now, though this tradition existed, no one ever succeeded in discovering these caves. About fifteen months ago, I was hunting a muffoli, a rare animal now in the Capo Mountains, and just succeeded in getting a shot at him, as he gained the brink of the precipice above; he staggered and fell, and in his death struggle rolled over. When I came up and looked over, I was surprised to see the animal lying partly on a ledge of rock and held there by one of his horns, driven into a split in a rock. I had never attempted to descend this cliff,

it looked so perilous a feat. So I went home and got a long coil of rope and a strong iron pin; this I drove into the ground, fastened my rope, and with Marguerita anxiously watching my descent, and aiding me by shifting the rope, I at length got to my prize. Now the ledge the muffoli rested upon led to this cavern, and I was attracted by the opening. I just peeped in, and was astounded by the spaciousness of this cavern, and therefore determined to visit it another time; fastening a cord Marguerite lowered to me, to the muffoli, I regained the summit by the aid of the knotted rope, and then we, after a desperate struggle, hauled up the muffoli. I did visit this cavern and explored it, bringing lights with me; and I think I will now prove to you that these caverns did, at one time, conceal a great number of people. I have a store of lights here, and some other articles, such as ropes, blocks, and iron crowbars. It was not impossible, I thought, that some time

or other these caves might again give shelter to fugitive and persecuted Corsicans. You will also be astonished when I tell you that a ramification from this cavern leads into a dry well in the court yard of the fortress of Nonza; you remember the well, my lord, I dare say?"

"Oh! yes," returned the Count, "I remember it distinctly; it's a dry well of very great depth, and I often wondered for what purpose it was sunk through the almost solid rock."

"I have an idea," said Rossi, "that it was known by an early chieftain of Nonza, as a means of escape when besieged, or a means of moving possessions. We will now, if you are rested, light a torch or two and make our way into the lower cavern of all, where Marguerita, and her Cousin Caraffa, will be sure to come, when dusk."

"But that ruffian, Franchi, in his rage and

disappointment at missing the capture of my person, may seize your wife and sister."

"No, my lord, he will not dare do that; he fears the men of the Capo; and his force, if they once rise against him, would only be safe within the walls of the fortress."

Pasquale Rossi now led the way to a place where he had stored his various articles. Two pine torches were lighted, and Pasquale Rossi led the way into another cavern of nearly the same dimensions, with several passages leading into other caverns. After passing through two narrow passages, descending somewhat rapidly, they entered an immense cavern, fully forty feet high, with rugged sides. In this cavern there was a great heap of bones, evidently of animals; here also were several pieces of old rusty armour, spear heads of antique shape, and remains of rude vessels, formed of baked clay.

"These spear heads," said Marco Remini, looking extremely surprised at what he beheld, "these spear heads are of Roman origin; probably at the period when Cornelius Scipio conquered the islands. The Romans, under Pyramus the Prætor, slew four thousand of the natives, and imposed a tax of two hundred thousand pounds of wax."

"It proves, my lord, how dearly we Corsicans loved liberty, for we have always endeavoured to purchase that blessing with no stint of our blood."

"True, *amico*," returned the Genoese nobleman, "but you see, it's the fate of all small nations; they must bend, or they are made to bend to the strong."

They now continued their descent over rugged, jagged rocks through several caves, till at last they paused on the brink of a steep precipice, like a wall of solid stone. Rossi threw the light of his torch over the dark depths whence the sound of running water,

could be distinctly heard. The height of the precipice was nearly thirty feet.

Pasquale Rossi now fastened his knotted rope to a stout iron bar, driven into a fissure between two rocks; by the aid of this rope, the party reached the bottom. They then perceived that a rapid stream descended through a gully and ran along the passage they were traversing, but confined to the channel it had in the course of time worn for itself. The roof of this passage was about nine feet high; after some fifty or sixty yards, the stream suddenly disappeared beneath an arched rock, and finally they reached, as Rossi declared, the level—that is, the foot of the hill, terminating in a cavern, by far the largest and loftiest of the whole range.

"They are certainly very extraordinary caverns," said the Count Remini, seating himself on a rock, whilst Rossi stuck a fresh lighted torch in the ground.

"I have spent many hours exploring these

caverns, my lord; they interested me greatly. We are now within a few yards of the secret opening that leads out into the thick forest that lines the shore of the gulf of San Fiorenza. I spent hours before I discovered this outlet. Time had filled what was once a considerable opening, with masses of rocks, and stones, and rubbish. I cleared just a sufficient opening to let a man pass, and outside an entangled mass of shrubs and plants conceals it; besides, I keep two iron bars here, one outside and one in, and when I leave I roll two masses of rock into the opening. You may wonder why I took all this trouble, but such a place of concealment for several families was desirable, in case of a cruel enemy in the first flush of victory, reeking their vengeance on those who opposed them. But we shall never be under the yoke of Genoa again."

"But, my good friend," said the Count, "you will have France for a master instead.

Recollect when the Marquis de Maellabois overran the island with his French troops, did he not cut down all your standing corn, vines, and olives and set fire to entire villages, besides hanging numbers of monks and others who attempted to oppose him?"

"Alas!" said Rossi, despondingly, "it is too true; but this time our good Paoli intends offering the island to England."

"England!" said Marco Remini, surprised. "Ah! they are islanders like yourselves, and a brave, liberty loving people. If England would become your protector, you would be safer than under any other power; but England would thus embroil herself with France. However, the future is hid from us; but this is very certain—Genoa is no longer a great maritime power; she will never attempt the conquest of the island again. Now let us see this outlet. I long to breathe the fresh air again."

"We had better not expose ourselves to

observation, as yet," said Rossi, "it is still strong daylight; we know not what search that bandit Franchi may institute. We shall know all when Marguerita and Gaspardo Caraffa arrive."

"I remember Caraffa well," said the Count, "but did not know he had married your eldest sister."

CHAPTER IX.

When the followers of Tomasso Franchi burst into the cottage of Pasquale Rossi and found their prey had escaped into the forest, they rushed after them, but recollecting how well Pasquale was acquainted with the intricacies of the forest, and how ignorant they were, being total strangers to the Capo, they desisted.

"Let us burn down the traitor Rossi's homestead," said one ruffian, with a volley of oaths and imprecations.

"You're a fool!" returned the rest. "We

should get shot like rooks by the Capo men every time they sighted us in twos or threes if we harmed the Rossi family. Besides, he is an especial favourite of Matri, whose life he saved. Let us go back to the fortress. Our chief will bring out his dogs, and then we may track them. He will be frantic when he hears of our lieutenant's cracked skull. Holy Mass! the Genoese Count brought down the butt of his carbine on his head like a sledge hammer; and that cursed fellow, his attendant, shot Meolo as dead as a pickled mullet. I have a cut myself across my left shoulder, and several of us are bruised. Let us back to the cottage and carry our comrade to the fortress and bury him. Our lieutenant is there by this time."

Such was the fact. With his head bandaged, to stop the flow of blood from the ugly gash he had received, Franchi's lieutenant, in a furious rage, returned alone to the fortress. If Franchi's lieutenant was in a furious rage,

his commander, when he heard the particulars of the Count's escape, resembled a maniac with passion. He heaped the grossest abuse upon his lieutenant, swore he would hang half his garrison if the fugitives were not found before nightfall. At once he despatched fifteen men to watch the approach to Oleano bay, and to keep their eyes upon the movements of the xebecque. He then armed himself, ordered his blood hounds out, and with twenty men, well armed, set out for Rossi's cottage, swearing he would in the first place burn it to the ground, and hang or shoot the whole of his family.

One of his officers told him he would rouse the Cape if he did, which so enraged the savage bandit that he pulled a pistol from his belt and would have shot his officer, had not his entire band called out that they would not stand being shot down like dogs, for what was not their fault.

Tomasso Franchi, though elected their

chief, very well knew that his men were not to be kept together by threats and ill-treatment; they considered themselves free to go if his service did not please them. They banded together for plunder, and solely plunder, and cared not a straw for the liberties of Corsica.

Tomasso Franchi swallowed his rage, put back his pistol in his belt, and whistling to his pet blood hounds, pushed on for Rossi's cottage, with the full determination of venting his rage upon it, and burning it down. But to his surprise, when he came in sight of the farm he perceived, seated upon the banks and assembled in groups, over thirty or forty of the men of the Cape, every man armed with his musket. The men looked at one another a little startled, for as they advanced the groups of peasants moved on, and many entered the cottage of Rossi; whilst one young man, whom the enraged Franchi recognised to be Gaspard Caraffa, with

Marguerita by his side, came out of the cottage, and stood regarding the approach of Franchi quite unconcernedly.

"Curse them," muttered Franchi, "they are all traitors."

"So," said the bandit, facing Caraffa, "you assemble here to oppose my search for a rascally spy and a traitor. Don't you know that I am sent here with authority from General Matri, and that if you oppose me in my duty you become traitors?"

"Who?" asked Caraffa.

"Colonel Franchi," interrupted the bandit, fiercely; "I hold my commission from General Matri."

"Well, Colonel Franchi, if an empty title pleases you, all well and good," returned Caraffa, with a laugh, echoed by the group of hardy peasants that now gathered about the bandit; "but why do you say we oppose you? We do not hinder you from hunting out as many spies and traitors as you think may be

found. We are only assembling here at my brother-in-law's to fire at targets; we do so once a week, and this is our day."

Franchi bit his lip in his rage. He knew that the men of the Cape did so, and after a moment's thought he recollected that it was their usual day; but he also knew if he attempted to fire or touch any of Pasquale Rossi's property he would have to stand a contest with thirty or forty stout, resolute, determined men. So, abandoning his project of vengeance against Rossi's farm, for that time, he passed on, and making a circuit of the farm plunged into the wood at the back of the cottage, and then let loose his blood hounds; these dogs soon came upon the scent and continued rapidly to follow the track of the Count and his companions, till they came to a full stop on the brink of the precipice, down which they had daringly made their way.

"Why, *Corpo di Bacco!* how's this?" ex-

claimed Franchi, coming up. "They have lost the scent; down this precipice it's not possible the traitors could have gone; the dogs are at fault. If they have thrown themselves over we shall find their carcasses at the foot of this cliff. Let us go round and beat the wood at the base. If they have made for Oleano they will be caught in a trap, and if I catch that dissembling villain Rossi, though I failed to fire his house, I'll hang him."

Franchi was however baulked. For several hours, he traversed the woods, gained the heights of Oleano bay, beheld the xebecque at anchor, but no trace of the fugitives. Perfectly satisfied that they could not get aboard the xebecque, he stationed his scouts, and established reliefs, and then, almost bursting with intense rage and vexation, returned about sunset to the fortress.

The garrison of Nonza consisted of eighty men. From the Capo no one could well pass without being subject to investigation. Satis-

fied that he had the Count and the traitor Rossi hid somewhere in the woods, he felt confident he would yet catch them. But several days passed and no better success attended his efforts. He then planned the scheme of inducing the Countess Remini to embark for Corsica, demanding a ransom of forty thousand crowns for the Count Remini, whom he stated was his captive, still thinking he must fall into his hands, especially as the xebecque had returned to Bastia, and no one he felt satisfied had succeeded in getting aboard her.

The Count Remini and his two companions remained within the cavern till nightfall; they then removed the stones blocking the entrance, and crushing through the mass of entangled brushwood, were once more breathing the pure air without. Marco Remini gazed around him, by the light of a bright starlight night, with considerable surprise. They were standing on the rugged

slope of a densely wooded hill. Beneath them lay the waters of the gulf, then calm and placid. The northerly gale had cleared the sky, and with the setting of the sun, subsided. Not a sound, save the ripple of the swell, disturbed the solitude of the forest, or the shores of the gulf. Neither village, nor hamlet, nor solitary hut reared its humble roof along the road. The hardy, simple Corsican peasant trusted for security to inaccessible heights—the summit of hills. Plundered and ill-treated by their conquerors, always in revolt against oppression, they avoided the beautiful valleys and picturesque spots for their homes, and built their hamlets where the eagle would have built his nest.

"It could scarcely have been through the outlet we emerged from," said the Count to Pasquale Rossi, "that the natives in early times drove in their cattle."

"I must suppose it was," said Rossi, "for I could never light upon any other outlet;

but the entrance might, centuries ago, have been considerably loftier and wider; the falling in of rocks and earth, and the growth of plants and brambles, in the course of years, have blocked it nearly up. Hark! there is Caraffa!" as Rossi's ear caught the well imitated cry of the hooded owl.

He immediately replied to it, imitating the bird of Minerva, and in a few moments the Count beheld Marguerita and Gaspardo Caraffa, both laden with wicker baskets.

Phillipo was by no means sorry at this sight. His appetite had become troublesome, so he hastened to relieve the pretty Marguerita of her bundles.

The Count Remini held out his hand to Gaspardo Caraffa, whom he remembered well, who, pressing it respectfully, said,

"I am rejoiced to see you, my lord, though grieved to find you in a somewhat perilous situation."

"I feel concerned," returned Marco

Remini, "that my, as it turns out, rash adventure, brings my friends into trouble; and also my pretty Marguerita, giving you such a load to carry."

"Ah! Madonna!" returned the maiden, "do not grieve for that, for it is a great pleasure to me to serve you, for I do not forget the kindness and generosity of your noble sister."

Marguerita Remini, from childhood, had been greatly attached to the Rossi family. Marguerita, her namesake and attendant, was a most especial favourite; and when leaving the island, bestowed upon the kind-hearted and attached Corsican maiden a handsome present, such as few Corsican damsels have for a marriage portion.

"Can we hope to make our way, Caraffa," questioned the Count, "to the shores of Oleano Bay to-night?"

"Impossible, my lord," returned the Corsican, "for that bandit, Franchi, has stationed

men, so as to intercept any strangers making for the shores of the bay. He hunted the woods half the day with his bloodhounds; and I do believe he intended to burn down Pasquale's homestead; but, suspecting the ruffian's intention, I assembled several friends before the house, on pretence of a shooting match, which rather startled him, for, though he has a force of over eighty men with him in Nonza, still, he fears the unity of the men of the Cape. We could perhaps assist you to the bay, but it would come to the ears of General Matri."

"On no account," interrupted the Count, "bring yourself into collision with that villain Franchi, because, in attempting to secure my person, he is actually only doing his duty. The time will come when General Matri will thoroughly understand and come to know the character of the ruffian he has placed in authority and given the rank of

Colonel to, together with so important a post as guardian of the Forest of Nonza."

After a good deal of conversation on their respective situations, and resolves how to act, the baskets were carried inside the cavern, and Marguerita and Caraffa departed, Caraffa promising to return the next night, with better intelligence, he hoped.

Caraffa and Marguerita had brought a good supply of provisions and wine, and several blankets.

Rossi lighted a fire from his store of wood, piled in an inner cave, for when the insurrection first broke out in the Cape, the natives feared defeat, being so close to Bastia and Calvi, and San Fiorenza, the main body of the Corsican troops being in the interior of the island, and Rossi thought the cavern would afford shelter to several families, in case of a temporary reverse.

From several causes,—the principal being General Matri's proclamation against Genoese

spies and assassins found skulking in Corsica; and Tomasso Franchi's being joined by some sixty or eighty more adventurers, and the determined watch kept,—neither our hero or Rossi were able to venture from the cavern.

After the departure of the xebecque, escape was next to impossible. Franchi also, emboldened by his increase of force, became insolent and overbearing, and threatened the men of the Cape, if they did not deliver up the fugitives; and Rossi he swore he would hang as a traitor, if he had a hundred Caraffas to assist him. Thus, time fled; and when the red felucca was burnt to the water's edge, on the shores of the Gulf of San Fiorenza, the Count Remini, Rossi, and Phillipo were still inhabitants of the cavern, and not a thousand yards from the spot where the Countess and the xebecque's crew landed, after the destruction of that vessel.

We have stated that Andrea Serri and his

companions, after leaving the Countess Remini and her female attendants under the protection of the most trusty of the crew of the xebecque, and two of her own personal male domestics, set out with the determination of securing a boat. One of the sailors said he had been in several Corsican harbours, and their best chance was to cross the hill and get to the hamlet of Oleano, where there were many fishing boats, and they could, no doubt, seize one, for the bay was celebrated for mullets, so prized by the Romans in the early ages. Juvenal says:—

"Mullus erst domini quem,
Misit Corsica."
("A precious mullet from the Corsica seas,
Not less the master's pampered taste can please.")

The party, therefore, struck across the forest. The tract they chanced to take passed within a very few yards of the opening into the caverns.

Pasquale Rossi, at the time they were pushing through the wood, had just been out

to have a view over the waters of the gulf, for, in the early dawn, as he and the Count were getting a little fresh air, and determining, weary as they were of confinement, to make a push for Oleano bay, and brave the rush of Franchi's followers. Pasquale heard the voices of the men, and as the Count was near, he said,

"I hear voices, my lord; there is some one coming this way. We can see without being perceived."

As the Count joined him, a man's voice was heard saying,

"Signor Andrea, this way; you are going too much to the right, and will find it impossible to climb yonder precipice."

"*San Marco*! what do I hear!" said the Count, pushing aside the bushes; and then he and Rossi could distinctly see the strangers as they struggled through the low underwood. "By all the saints! Rossi, that

foremost man is Andrea Serri," and dashing aside the brambles and high grass and plants, he sprang out, and in a loud voice called out to Andrea Serri to halt.

The sound of the Count's voice seemed to electrify the party; but Andrea, turning round, gazed for a moment in bewildered amazement at the Count, and then, with a shout of joy, dashed through the heath, and in a moment was by his side, seizing his hand, and repeatedly kissing it, saying,

"The blessed saints be praised! is this possible—is it really you, my lord?"

"Yes, *cospetto!* It is I. Of that fact you may be satisfied, my good fellow; my beard and moustache are certainly rather overgrown, but in the name of the Pope, who are these men, and how came you to be in Corsica, when I left you with my Countess?"

"Holy Mary! I am so amazed," said Andrea; "but you will be astonished, my

lord, when I tell you I am still in the Countess's service, and the Countess herself not a thousand yards from here."

Marco Remini's eyes flashed with excitement, as he grasped Andrea Serri's arm. He then recollected how perilous her situation must be, should Franchi get a glimpse of the vessel he supposed she must be in.

"Pray explain, Andrea; for I am thunderstruck. She is aboard some vessel, of course."

"She was, my lord," interrupted Andrea, "but the miscreants aboard set fire to her, but we got the Countess safe ashore. She came, my lord, to ransom you from the hands of the villain Franchi."

He then explained all to the impatient and angry Count.

"Oh! my beloved Monimia!" he exclaimed, "what you must have suffered! But, come, we are loitering here; let us join her at once, and defend her with our lives."

"Stay, my lord," said Rossi, laying his hand on the Count's arm; "one moment listen to me, or we may defeat all, and throw ourselves and your Countess into the power of Franchi."

As he spoke, all started, for they heard the loud baying of the hounds after the wild boar.

"Ah!" continued Rossi. "Tomasso Franchi and his brigands are in the forest with those dogs."

"*Benissimo!*" exclaimed the Count, eagerly, and laying his hand upon a pistol; "let's forward,—let me face that miscreant. Now I have a life dearer than my own to protect, and one or other of us dies!"

"But, Count," said Rossi, "let us keep cool; we may make a successful resistance. Let us conceal ourselves within view of your Lady Countess, and take the villains, who must largely outnumber us, at some advantage."

"You are right, my faithful friend; let us advance, as you say, cautiously."

Then the whole party, guided by Andrea, reached a thick mass of brushwood some twenty feet above where the Countess and her attendants were standing up, listening to the loud baying of the hounds.

Marco Remini felt his heart beat painfully, when he beheld the noble form and beautiful features of his bride, flushed with excitement, as Tomasso Franchi, with his ruffian followers, suddenly appeared before her. His first impulse was to spring over the break and rush upon the ungrateful villain, who, after abusing his hospitality and generosity, and robbing him, now dared to insult his beloved Monimia before his very sight. But he felt extreme reluctance to drag his friend Rossi into collision with his countrymen. Therefore, laying his hand on Pasquale's arm, he said,

"Stay where you are, dear friend; and

leave me to cope with those ruffians. You must not shed the blood of your countrymen in the cause of a Genoese."

"Do not, I pray you, my lord, call those sweepings of our jails, convicts, and bandits, my countrymen. I would rather shoot one of those rascals than I would a wild beast."

Phillipo Crotona, could scarcely keep his finger from the trigger of his gun, he felt such an intense desire to bring down the bandit where he stood. Every word that was uttered by the ruffian in speaking to the Countess could be heard, as well as her replies. Marco Remini's indignation had reached boiling point, when he heard Tomasso Franchi, in a savage tone, say,

"You must follow me, my fair dame; the game is now in my hands."

The Count could stand it no longer, but telling those who were ready to follow him to be cool and reserve their fire, he was about to spring over the hedge, when the

report of a gun was heard from the forest in the rear of Tomasso Franchi's party, and at the same moment, to the amazement of all looking on, the doomed bandit, with a cry of rage, sprang into the air and then fell prostrate on the sod, grasping the grass in his passion and agony, for he had received his death wound from an unknown and unseen hand. For a moment his followers stood appalled, and then with a shout of rage and vengeance, one half of them rushed towards the forest, from whence came a long wreath of grey smoke, betraying the spot from whence came the fatal shot.

"Now then," said the astonished Count, who had paused, "let us disperse the remainder of these ruffians. I feel satisfied that I had not to strike that miserable traitor down."

The noise made by the Count and his followers crushing through the brushwood

attracted the attention of the amazed Countess and her attendants.

Looking round, she at once recognised her beloved husband, notwithstanding his Corsican dress and bearded face, and with a cry of joy, she sprang to his side, just as the remaining bandits, seeing their enemies rushing upon them, raised their muskets, aimed at the Count and Countess in their rage and desire of revenge, and then fled. Providentially the lovers escaped, though a ball raised the skin from the Countess's arm, and another tore the golden clasp from her mantle, whilst the Count's cap was knocked from his head. Throwing his arm round his beloved Monimia, the Count pressed her with a feeling of indescribable happiness to his heart. So overcome was the Countess, she could not utter a syllable. With words of tenderness and fond love he soothed and calmed her agitation, and then led her a few paces from

the body of the dying bandit. They seated themselves on a rock, whilst the attendants retiring to a little distance, left them to themselves.

Tomasso Franchi, though mortally wounded, had still his senses, and was quite cognisant of what was going on. Controlling his agony, he lay perfectly still, and as the Count and Countess retired, he turned a little on his side and watched their every movement; he beheld the lovers seated within twenty yards of him, with their backs to him.

"Oh!" cried the bandit, "cursed be the hand that fired that shot! Still, for ten, nay, five minutes of life, and the strength of a child, and I die revenged."

With trembling hands, his blood flowing rapidly, he drew two loaded pistols from his belt; with a suppressed groan of agony, he contrived to cock them. Husband and wife, side by side, the Count's arm encircling his beloved Monimia's waist, paid no heed to

sounds. The two female attendants were hid from view by the tuft of trees; all the men were in pursuit of the bandits, except Pasquale Rossi, and he had walked back to the cave for the purpose of closing the entrance. Franchi, in frightful agony, drew himself along the ground, the path marked by his life's blood.

"I am dying," he muttered, "dying like a dog; but," he gasped, "if I have life to crawl ten yards nearer," and on he crawled. "Oh! life, life! two minutes' life!" he muttered, and he reached within six yards of his intended victims. Steadying himself on his knees by a mighty effort, he was raising the two pistols, but at that moment Monimia chanced to turn her head. With a wild shriek of horror, she dashed her hands against her husband's breast, and both rolled over as the report of the two pistols rung through the air, the balls passing over the very spot where the lovers had been sitting, and lodg-

ing in the trunk of the tree opposite them. With a frantic cry of rage, despair, and agony, Tomasso Franchi rolled over on his face; for an instant he tore up the grass and earth with his nails, and then, with a fearful spasm, expired.

Remini raised his Monimia, pressing her fondly to his heart, saying,

"The detestable villain has failed; to you, my own devoted and beloved, I owe my life. Your presence of mind saved us both. Miserable wretch," he continued, walking towards and gazing on the dead bandit, "your vile career is run, dying as you lived, a ruthless, reckless murderer."

In the meantime, Andrea and his companions pursued the bandits, who fled towards Nonza, to bring their comrades and take a terrible revenge. Two, however, fell from shots fired by Andrea and Phillipo, pursuing till they suddenly came upon the spot where, suspended from the branches of the

trees, hung the three bodies of the miscreants who fired the red felucca, and stretched at their feet, were the three other bodies.

"Well, *Corpo di Bacco!*" said Andrea, to Phillipo, "here is justice administered with strict impartiality; this is that ruffian Franchi's doings. Let us go back; those villains will get their comrades in the fortress to reinforce them and return. We must all get inside the caves; the men of the Capo will rise to a man and finish them, now Franchi is no more."

"Stay, look," said Phillipo; "there is a fine large boat below upon the beach."

"*Cospetto!*" shouted Andrea, joyfully, looking down, "that is the boat of the red felucca, that these wretches launched after firing the vessel. *Madonna*! in that we can escape, and pull round the Capo to Bastia. Come, let us take it, and row back to where we left the Count and Countess."

Descending the hill, they launched the boat,

got in, and began pulling back to where the felucca was sunk and burned.

The Count and Countess and Pasquale Rossi were just then consulting and planning what next was to be done, for Pasquale knew perfectly well that the bandits of Nonza would return in force, when he perceived the boat coming towards them.

"Ah! there is a piece of good fortune, my lord," he added, directing the Count's attention to the boat. "In that boat you may, in this calm, moderate weather, reach Bastia; but you must be quick in embarking, for depend upon it, the whole garrison of Nonza will be here, with a determination to revenge their leader's death."

"But who fired that shot, Pasquale?"

A flush passed over his fine open countenance, as he replied,

"As to who fired the shot that slew that heartless ruffian, the less that's said about it

the better. Tomasso Franchi, the bandit and assassin, merited a worse death."

The Count pressed Pasquale's hand warmly.

"Is it not dangerous, my good friend, to leave you here exposed to the vengeance of those blood-thirsty men ?"

"No, my lord ; no danger whatever. I will remain in the cave for a couple of days; at the end of that time, the bandits of Nonza will know their leader is dead, and that they will either have to starve, shut up in their fortress, or fly the Capo, for they will be shot down to a man by the peasantry, whose homes they have outraged; and now, I pray you, embark."

"Be it so, Pasquale; I am ready."

"But, my good friend, Signor Rossi, whose noble, generous devotion has saved my beloved husband," said the Countess, with much emotion, "let me give you the chance

of recovering the sum of twenty thousand crowns, intended for his ransom; it is yours by right, and there will be little difficulty in recovering it. The iron casket that contains it lies not a hundred yards from yon lofty projecting rock; a good diver can easily fasten a rope to the ring, and with help above, raise it. Keep it and use it, I pray you. Let it remind you of us, whose gratitude is boundless; for what would life have been to me, but for your assistance?"

The Countess held out her fair and beautiful hand, which Rossi took, and pressing his lips respectfully upon it, saying, with much emotion,

"Lady, I would peril a hundred lives to save one like you from a single pang; but the sum you name is a very large one, and easily, indeed, recovered."

"So much the better, *Santa Madonna*! I rejoice to hear," said the Count. "It's a poor gift after all, *caro amico*, for we are

bestowing that which is no longer our own. Ah!" he added, as he looked towards the wood, "here is your pretty sister, Marguerita, and hurrying over the ground, as if in haste."

"I am so glad," said the Countess, joyfully, "to see and thank Marguerita Rossi."

"Ah! my lord," said the young girl, hurrying up, and with a light flush over her handsome features, she gracefully saluted the Countess, who put her arm round her neck and kissed her, saying,

"I rejoice to be able to thank you personally for your attention and devotion to my beloved husband," and taking a very handsome and beautifully worked gold chain from her neck, she dropped it over the surprised Corsican maiden's neck. "When you see this, it will remind you of our love and lasting gratitude."

"Ah! madame," exclaimed the young girl, agitated, "I shall always pray for your hap-

piness; but delay not one moment. The bandits of Nonza are making their way through the forest. I ran the whole way; so leave this. Ah! *Madonna*! hear the dogs!"

And the loud bay of the foremost dogs was indeed heard.

"Farewell, Rossi, and you, fair Marguerita," said the Count, kissing her forehead. "You will hear from us again, if God spare us."

In the meantime, Andrea and Phillipo, and the men of the red felucca, had prepared the boat; they had picked up oars and sails washed ashore from the wreck, and had put aboard the baskets with the wine and provisions.

It was, indeed, time to move, for with a continuous howl, the great dogs broke out from the wood, and rushed on till they came to the dead body of Tomasso Franchi; there they paused, and seemed undecided, but in the distance, a body of nearly thirty bandits

could be seen through a break in the trees, hurrying towards them.

The Count, taking his fair bride in his arms, lifted her into the boat, whilst Rossi and his sister Marguerita turned to conceal themselves in the caverns till night.

They were soon all seated, and the boat pushed off, and four of the seamen applied themselves to the oars with unmistakable energy, for, although safe from personal encounter, they were within reach of the bandits' muskets. They had gained but a moderate distance from the shore, when the men of Nonza, shouting and yelling imprecations at their escape, reached the beach.

The Count at once, though she struggled to remain at his side, placed his Countess along the stern-sheets of the boat. In the next instant a volley from the bandit's muskets dashed the water over the boat, and knocked pieces out of her gunwale and the oars of her men; but only one man was

hit, and that slightly. Before they could reload, the boat was pulled out of reach of shot, and then the sail was hoisted, and the Count, taking the helm, steered to clear the bold head forming the northern boundary of the Gulf of San Fiorenza.

The boat that contained the Count and Countess Remini was a very long sea-worthy craft. Lateen-rigged vessels, like the "Red Felucca," carry unusually large boats, conveying cargoes and passengers to places having neither harbours nor piers. They are in the habit of landing cargoes and passengers on open beaches, on which the towns stand. The boat the party were in was, therefore, quite capable of carrying the party in safety round the Cape of Bastia. The distance was scarcely sixty miles; therefore, as the wind then blew, they might expect to reach that place early on the following day.

The Count cheered his beloved partner, who, satisfied with being near the husband of her choice, cared little for the privations she endured. Wine and some provisions from the baskets were served out, which all needed; and having cleared the head, the Count steered for the Cape, hoping—though the weather near sunset did bear a rather threatening aspect—to get round the Cape before midnight. But as they proceeded, the breeze kept shifting, till, at length, it got well to the south, which would be dead against them in doubling the Cape; and, moreover, it came in squalls, and the sky looked threatening.

Marco Remini looked anxious. They could, certainly, make the land, and draw the boat up; but they would then expose themselves to captivity, for they were, at sunset, nearly twenty miles from San Fiorenza, and near the extremity of the Cape, where there was a

strong fort, in possession of the Corsican troops. To land, therefore, would be to surrender as prisoners.

Not a single vessel was to be seen near them, so that Marco Remini, for several moments, was doubtful how to act. To expose the Countess to the dangers and sufferings of a passage across to the coast of Genoa, in an open boat, was a great and terrible risk.

Monimia perceived the anxiety expressed in her husband's features, and readily guessed the cause. She whispered some words in his ear, and, with a look of devotion in return, he made up his mind to dare the passage across, as the wind was right against their doubling the Cape, and not too strong for the passage across. Twelve or fourteen hours would run them across to Genoa. So, trimming the boat—and a remarkably fine boat she was, over thirty-six feet long, with good beam, and fast.

Night set in, with an increase of wind;

and as they left the land behind them, the sea became high; still, the little craft, skilfully handled, with reefed lug, ran steadily before it.

The Countess and her female attendants were seated on the floor of the boat, and protected from the spray that, at times, flew over them by the backs of the men ranged along the sides. It was a wild night and an ugly sea; but confidence in the skill of the Count, and the goblets of wine sent round several times during the night, kept all their spirits up.

When morning dawned, no land was in sight, and the wild billows, as they swept past, and broke with an angry sound, sending their white spray in sheets over the boat and its silent inmates, would have struck a chill to many men possessed of a stout heart. They had baled the boat several times during the night; and now, as the sun rose, the breeze slackened a little, and the rays, striking

through the broken clouds, gave warmth and life to the voyagers.

Before mid-day, the coast of Liguria rose before them, and several large square-rigged vessels were seen pursuing their voyages, with reefed sails; but too far to be spoken with.

"The worst is past, my beloved," said Marco Remini to his Monimia. "Thank God! in five hours we shall be once more in old Genoa."

And Marco Remini's words were true words, for, two hours before sunset, the boat rounded the west pier, and in ten minutes' time they entered the arsenal, amid the cheers of the persons assembled, and who recognised the Commander of the "Prima," in the Corsican dress and bearded face.

Restored to home and happiness, Monimia thought only of the past in grateful prayers and thanksgivings to Providence, for their merciful preservation from so many perils.

The story of all the lovers had gone through was the talk and wonder of the Genoese ladies, and unceasing were the calls of nobles and cavaliers at the Palace of the Count and Countess Remini, anxiously enquiring after their health and welfare.

Andrea Serri received the hand of the Countess' attendant, and was well rewarded, and so, indeed, were all concerned in their preservation.

Shortly after the Count's return he again sailed for Bastia, to negociate for the release of the Count Carignano, and his sister Marguerita. From General Matri he obtained not only a safe pass to traverse the island, but also a guard of six armed Corsicans to conduct him to the residence of the wise and simple-minded General Paoli,—a name that will live for ever in the hearts and memories of the Corsicans, who for so many centuries appreciated the blessings of liberty as the greatest of all gifts Providence can bestow.

The Count Remini never forgot his interview with Paoli. With the generosity and nobleness of his disposition he at once gave orders for the release of the Count Carignano and his Countess, and their few but brave followers.

"I know," said the General, "how to appreciate and love a brave and gallant enemy. The names of Remini and Carignano will always be remembered with respect by us Corsicans, for during the long years they held feudal possession of land in this country they gained the love and respect of their vassals. It will be in your power, Count Remini," continued Paoli, "when you return to Bastia to restore to liberty as many of my brave countrymen as I now free to you of the soldiers of Genoa."

After his interview with the General, Marco Remini proceeded to Ajaccio with the order for the release of his brother-in-law and his sister Marguerita. Their joy in meeting was

in truth great, and together they all returned to Bastia, as the truce between the contending islanders and the Genoese Government was at an end. The Count Remini found it impossible to visit the Cape. Shortly after returning to Genoa, the Republic ceded their rights in the treaty of Compiègne to the King of France, who undertook to govern the islanders till the Republic should reimburse them their expenses; but Paoli and his brave, devoted countrymen offered so desperate a resistance that the cost of the enterprise to the French King amounted to the immense sum of 30,000,000 livres, which so incensed the royal tyrant that he sent thirty thousand men, under Marshal de Vaux, to Corsica. Finally the brave islanders were treated so badly that Paoli was forced to leave his country to take refuge in England. The Count Remini, long before this, retired from the naval service of the Republic, inheriting a large fortune from a distant kinsman. At

this time there arrived from Corsica, in a Tuscan vessel, four huge chests directed to the Count Remini. On opening these chests the Count and Countess were astonished to find that they were filled with most valuable and highly prized articles formerly contained in the Remini Mansion in Cape Corsica—valuable pictures, ancient armour, and various other articles. These things were greatly prized by the Count's father, and Marco Remini felt great pleasure and interest in their restoration. They contained also two long letters from Pasquale Rossi and his sister Marguerita, then a married dame, to the Countess Monimia.

The Count and Countess perused these letters with great interest; that of Pasquale Rossi we give in full, as it explained some of the events that took place in the Cape after the escape of the Count and the death of Tomasso Franchi.

Rossi's letter was as follows:—

"Thinking, my lord, that you would be pleased to hear how affairs went on in the Cape after your departure—and a most fortunate escape you had—I will give you a few particulars.

"From the mouth of the caverns myself and sister watched the bandits; their rage was excessive when they perceived that they had failed even in hitting anyone in the boat. They then carried off the body of Franchi, swearing deadly vengeance against his slayer when caught, and against me and my family. We were obliged to remain till nearly midnight before we could venture to leave, for, as long as daylight lasted, the bandits continued to hunt the forest with their dogs. Marguerita was fearfully afraid that my wife and mother might be ill-treated; but I knew Caraffa had organised a band of over one hundred brave men, who would, on a given signal, be ready to meet the ruffians, if they attempted to attack any of our homesteads.

As we proceeded towards the hamlet where Caraffa resided we encountered four of his cousins coming to meet us. He told me it would now be war to the knife, for the villains had burned down my farm, and destroyed everything about it. The alarm spread, and signal fires were lighted, and the bandits, alarmed, had retreated within the walls of Nonza.

"I may here confess that it was my brother-in-law, Caraffa, who fired the shot that rid the island of that detestable wretch Tomasso Franchi. I think I told you a terrible *vendetta* existed betwen Franchi and Caraffa. Franchi treacherously slew Caraffa's younger brother at his wedding feast, and Caraffa vowed he would take Tomasso Franchi's life at the first good opportunity, and certainly he could not have done so at a more fitting time. He has since seen General Paoli, and solemnly pledged himself to forego the *vendetta* for

ever. At this time the General was aware what a villain Franchi was, and that Caraffa had done a good deed to rid the Cape of such a disgrace to the Corsican cause.

"Forced to sally out in search of provisions, we constantly attacked and slew several of its band; till, at last, terrified at our determination to exterminate them, they loaded themselves with their booty, and, in the dead of night, thought to escape; but aware of this, through the treachery of one of the villains, who swore to be revenged on them for ill-treatment, we lay in ambush below the pass of Nonza, attacked them at the dawn of day, killed more than half of their number, and seized all their plunder; the rest fled into the interior, and were afterwards seized by order of General Paoli, and hung—a fate they richly merited for the crimes they committed during their occupation of Nonza.

"Having now peace and time to ourselves,

my brother-in-law, Caraffa, and myself turned our attention to finding the iron coffer. Caraffa, an admirable diver, readily found it, and hooking a strong chain to it, it was hauled up safe into the boat. I return you, my good lord, ten thousand crowns in the same coffer; it is at the bottom of the armour chest; ten thousand crowns in gold, which I retain, being a large fortune for a simple Corsican land owner. With part of this sum I have purchased from the Government the Remini Mansion, and restore to you the valuable pictures and relics your noble father so dearly cherished. It was the wish of the peasants, once vassals of your family, and they begged me to accept a sum equivalent to the articles; but I am rich beyond my wants or my wishes, and feel a greater pleasure in presenting them to you, the sole descendant of a family still cherished in Corsica.

"Now, my lord, let me conclude, trusting

that Providence may watch over you and your noble and devoted spouse.

"Such will always be the prayer of your

"Devoted Servant,

"PASQUALE ROSSI."

On the return of the Count Remini and his brother-in-law, Carignano, from Corsica, we forgot to mention that the Senate of Genoa had passed a vote of censure against the two Counts, for their evident leaning, as they pleased to term it, to the Corsican rebels, and for having themselves liberated a number of Corsican prisoners whilst in Bastia.

Though their liberation cost the two Counts a large sum, paid to the greedy and imbecile Governor of Bastia, yet the doing so, annoyed the government, and they even censured the old governor for accepting the ransom, although General Paoli had liberated the Count and his eighty followers without

exacting a piastre of ransom. The two Counts only smiled at this contemptible proceeding, for, not long after, the senate, by their own miserable greediness and pusillanimity, lost the island altogether, and finally caused the extinction for ever of the once proud republic of Genoa.

THE END OF THE RED FELUCCA.

THE SEA ROBBER.

THE SEA ROBBER.

CHAPTER I.

THE MASSANIELLO.

Towards the close of a fine clear day, in the year 1860, a large and exceedingly handsome craft, of some two hundred tons burden, might have been seen approaching the small and apparently, to the eye from shipboard, sterile, rocky, and inaccessible Island of Melita, some few miles off the Coast of Sicily. This vessel had three masts, and was

rigged as a xebecque, a vessel almost peculiar to the waters of the Mediterranean. The Island of Melita has a singularly wild and picturesque appearance, its whole circumference being not more than five miles.

To a casual observer this xebecque had nothing very remarkable in her appearance. She was very long and low, but with great beam. This width of deck accounted for the enormous yards. Towering to a peak, apparently tapering to the size of a fishing rod, these immense yards gave a vast spread of canvas to the light winds of summer. This xebecque had a very splendid and beautifully executed figure-head of the famous Massaniello, whose name she bore.

The xebecque was approaching the Island of Melita, with a pleasant westerly breeze just curling the wave, and the dazzling rays of the declining sun played on their mimic crests, and lighted up the lofty crags of the island with intense brightness. There were

numerous vessels in sight, of various sizes and rigs, some steering steadily before the breeze, for the Italian coast, others beating up for the blue hills of Sicily, but the "Massaniello" alone seemed bent on making for the Island of Melita.

On the after deck of the xebecque walked a young man, habited in the ordinary garb of the Italian sailor, except that instead of the bright red woollen cap, with its pendant tassel, he wore a peaked cap, with a broad gold band round it. He was tall, well formed, and of gentlemanly appearance. There was only one man at the helm; four or five others were lolling over the bulwarks, gazing across the five miles of sea that still separated them from their destination.

The breeze, even with all her lofty canvas spread, scarcely bent the xebecque a few inches, though she ran through the calm sea full seven knots an hour. The sun was setting as the vessel neared Melita. The fore-

sail and mainsail were brailed, and then, under her mizen, she approached the island, just as the sun sunk in the ocean bed, and the westerly breeze died off into fitful puffs. The xebecque was rounded to, and, when head to wind, the anchor, ready prepared, let go, and the "Massaniello" rode tranquilly at her moorings.

In those sunny climes twilight is short. The Captain of the "Massaniello," as soon as the face of the deep was shrouded by the gloom of night, applied a whistle to his lips, and immediately eighteen or twenty men, habited like those on deck, came pressing up from the fore-cabin, which was of large dimensions.

"Now, my lads," said the young man who was the Captain, "launch one or two boats, and some of you bring up our prisoner."

Lanterns were lighted, and all hands became exceedingly busy. Whilst the boats were launching, two of the crew brought up

from below a man habited like themselves, He was handcuffed.

On reaching the deck the prisoner was secured by a strong rope to a ring bolt. The Captain of the "Massaniello" stepped up to him, and one of the crew threw the light of a ship's lantern upon his face. He was a young man, tall, and with very comely features, but he was deadly pale.

"Traitor!" exclaimed the Captain, "your time shortens; the fate you have brought upon yourself awaits you. You tremble."

"No," returned the captive, "I do not tremble, I do not fear death; but let my comrades judge me."

"*Benissimo!*" returned the Captain sneeringly; "so they will."

Approaching the busy crew, the Captain perceived that they had launched the two boats, and were loading them from the open hatches with various kinds of merchandise, in bales, boxes, jars, and hampers.

"When you are ready, my lads, summon me."

He then descended into the main cabin, a large and commodious one, but with little or no decoration; neither were there arms of any kind to be seen. Sitting at a table was a man about five and thirty years of age He was not a sailor, either in look or attire. There were a lot of printed ships papers, bills of lading, &c., &c , on the table, and the individual seated at it was exceedingly busy, altering and arranging them.

The Captain opened a cupboard, and took out a flask and two glasses, and then sat down, placing them on the table near him.

"Where are you arranging, Stephano, that the goods we shall take aboard to-night shall be landed?"

The man looked up. His was a common, every-day face; the small, dark eyes expressed cunning, but nothing more, and he simply replied,

"The bill will be for Leghorn. Are you in a hurry?"

"No, not at all," returned the Captain, pouring out two glasses of a rich sparkling wine; "thanks to the state of affairs in Sicily and Napoli and the mad projects of that filibuster, Garibaldi, our gunboats and guarda costas have plenty of occupation cut out for them."

"You made," remarked the man, tossing off his glass, "a clean sweep of the brig; not a soul escaped, eh?"

"No, not one, if you except our prisoner, that false traitor, Antonio Gio. We battened the hatches down, scuttled her, and down she went in fifty fathoms water."

"But why not have let the rascal, Gio, share the fate of the brig's crew?"

"Why, *cospetto*! *amico*," returned the Captain, "it's contrary to our laws and oaths, and to our customs. He will meet his fate to-night—be condemned by the votes of his

comrades. Not one dissenting voice will there be."

As the light of the swinging lamp, suspended to the beam of the deck, flashed upon the handsome features of the Captain of the "Massaniello," an observer might be struck by their calm, collected expression when he spoke of sending a whole ship's crew into eternity, by a cruel death, as unconcernedly as of drowning a litter of puppies.

"But how did you discover that this man, Antonio Gio, intended to betray you? You know you only picked me up off Spolota the day before yesterday, and I have, therefore, heard nothing about it."

"We had proof enough," returned the Captain. "According to our custom, we left this Gio, who has been only two years with us, in a certain place, to pick up all the necessary information respecting vessels sailing from that port; their destination, cargo, number of men, &c. As he was considered a

recent addition to our association we left a keen hand with him. This man, after a time, suspected Gio; so he pretended to depart to a port at some distance. Now Vanti, the companion of Gio, had already fixed upon the brigantine for us to plunder, but left it to Gio to give the final information, as to time of sailing, cargo, &c. Instead of doing so he shipped himself aboard the brigantine, and sent us word that the brig would not sail till the twenty-fourth, that she had no gunpowder aboard, and that her crew consisted of captain, mate, six able seamen, and one boy; instead of which she sailed on the eighteenth, had fifty barrels of gunpowder aboard, and her crew amounted to fifteen, with three passengers.

"Set right by private information from Vanti, for we were then in a neighbouring port, we put to sea, and watched the brigantine, and boarded her in the night. Several of our men were wounded by the very fierce

resistance made, and then the Captain tried to blow the vessel up, by setting fire to the gunpowder, and we only escaped destruction by his pistol missing fire; the next moment I brained him with a hatchet. We secured the traitor, Gio, who tried to jump overboard, fastened down the crew all but one, who leaped overboard and was drowned, and then scuttled her, and made sail, having of course transported her valuable cargo, and the papers, which are now before you, aboard the 'Massaniello.' Thus, had that villain escaped and reached Leghorn, our place of retreat, and our plans and projects, would all have been betrayed. So now the traitor will meet his doom."

"Serve him quite right," replied the man, who was writing. "I am ready, if it is time, to go ashore, and take the list of goods there."

"They are ready by this time," said the skipper, finishing a couple more glasses of the

wine. "I want to be expeditious, so as to make sail with the dawn."

Both then ascended on deck. The night had become exceedingly dark, for the hitherto clear sky was by this time covered with dark clouds; but the sea continued perfectly calm and still.

"The boats are all ready," said the mate, addressing the Captain; "shall we show our signal?"

"Yes."

Immediately the mate applied a match to a rocket, which shot up into the still darkness of the night with a brilliant rush of fiery sparks, and then burst in one large ball of blue, which slowly descended till near the water's edge, and burst into brilliant sparks, and then all became wrapt in gloom.

Some two or three minutes elapsed, all eyes turned towards the shore—at least, where they knew the shore was—and then suddenly a bright blue light was seen, like a star,

which each moment increased in brilliancy, till it exploded in numerous blue balls ; these became extinguished, but the bright blue star remained steadily fixed, apparently about ten feet above the level of the water.

"All right," said the skipper of the xebecque; "jump in, my lads, and guard your prisoner."

In a few minutes all were in the boats, except the watch for the night, who remained to guard the vessel, in case of a shift of wind or any sudden change in the weather. The men pulled slowly towards the steady blue light, and as they came near the rocky shore, they could perceive several men on the rocks with poles, and that the blue light was held aloft on a pole, to guide them into the entrance of a deep narrow channel between the rocks.

The men with the poles were to keep the boats off from the rocks on each side, for though calm, the sea rose and fell tolerably

heavy upon that iron bound coast. Throwing the men on the rocks a warp, the two large boats were towed along the creek, till they took the ground on a fine shingly beach.

A dozen men, with torches, stood ready to receive them, and various greetings and questions and mutual congratulations took place, and all saluted the Captain of the "Massaniello" respectfully. The entire piece of shingly beach was covered with merchandise, ready to put into the boats as soon as the freight then in them was landed, and this was done in an incredibly short period, and the reloading commenced.

The skipper, with the man named Stephano, walked up the beach, two of the men preceding them with torches; then it was that the entrance to a large cavern became perceptible.

Entering this cavern, in which there was nothing very remarkable, for it was neither

of great height nor extent, the light of the torches fell upon a narrow opening, through which a light was to be seen.

This was the entrance to a range of most remarkable caverns, partly natural and partly the work of man ; this entrance could be closed by two massive rocks, which revolved upon two great iron bars, and completely blocked the entrance, leaving it so like the natural sides of the cavern as to defy detection. The skipper and his companion entered through this opening, the former desiring the two men to return to their comrades, and telling them, when the boats were finally loaded, to assemble in the outward cavern and bring in their prisoner.

On entering the inner cavern, they perceived a man sitting at a table, on which stood a large lamp ; a heap of papers lay before him, together with several bags of gold and silver coin. He was the steward of this desperate band of Ladri de Mare (sea

robbers). This was division night, and the man at the table was portioning out the different sums due to the men.

The inner cavern and the two adjoining, were of great height and extent, and along the sides were piled boxes and chests, bales of goods, barrels, casks, jars, vast heaps of cordage, blocks, and other articles belonging to ships. Here was stored the plunder of many a goodly vessel, and as fast as cargoes were brought in, goods were shipped off for various ports.

The Robber Captain, after speaking for a few minutes with the steward, left Stephano to help him in his task, and taking a torch, passed along the ranges of goods, carefully examining them.

No gunpowder was allowed to be stored in the caverns, or combustibles of any kind; in one of the inner caverns was a great quantity of wine in casks and hogsheads. Having examined particularly every nook

and corner of the caverns, the Captain returned to the cave, where the steward and Stephano were busy ; the men were then coming up from the boats with the landed cargo, and in a very short time all the plunder was carefully stowed away, the accounts settled, and all assembled in the outer cavern, having closed up the entrance to the inner caverns. Two large torches were placed in the sconces, which threw a bright flame over all around, and upon the faces of the forty men standing round the sides of the cavern in profound silence.

"Bring forth your prisoner," said the Robber Captain, in his deep, sonorous voice, himself standing forth apart from all.

Two men brought forth the captive and placed him, with his arms pinioned behind his back, in the middle of the circle. The man looked steadily round, gazing into the faces of his comrades, hoping, perhaps, to see some trace of pity in their rugged, hardened

features; but they met his glance with fierce and angry expression of countenance. The prisoner pressed his lips hard, and a slight tremour might be observed, but the moment after, he stood firm and collected, with his eyes fixed upon the calm features of the Captain.

"Antonio Gio," said the skipper, in a clear, calm tone, "when you took the oaths to join our confederation, you were distinctly made aware of the fate that was sure to fall upon a traitor, upon one who ever entertained a thought of betraying his comrades, or any one of our secrets."

"You call me a traitor!" retorted the captive, in a firm voice. "I say it is false; I never intended to betray a single secret."

"Villain and liar!" exclaimed the Robber Captain, his countenance, hitherto unruffled, changing into a dark and menacing expression. "Do you dare to assert so gross a falsehood, and in the presence of the very

man, your especial comrade, who detected your traitorous designs ?"

"Still I say I am no traitor," said the captive; "my intention was to free myself from a life I abhor. I intended to desert, but not to betray; I respected the oaths I had taken."

A mocking laugh burst from the Captain's lips, and a few murmurs from the men.

"Your own words condemn you. Phillipo Vanti, stand forth."

One of the men came forward, a tall, vigorous man, with a dark complexion; still youthful, with good features, but dark, vengeful eyes, which flashed as he let them rest upon the victim.

"Did not this traitor, Gio," continued the Captain, "give you notice that the brigantine 'Sonorello,' was to sail on the twenty-fourth, and she sailed on the eighteenth; that her entire crew consisted of seven men and a boy, and that she shipped neither arms nor

gunpowder, instead of which she carried fifteen armed men, and fifty barrels of gunpowder, and that she was on a secret expedition ?"

"He did," returned Phillipo Vanti, "and he also formed a project for removing his wife and child off the island."

"Do you deny this?" asked the Captain, addressing the prisoner.

"I do not," he returned; "still, I deny ever intending to betray my comrades."

A mocking laugh was the Captain's reply, as turning to the men eagerly awaiting the result, he said,

"You have heard the replies to my questions. I ask you now, what doom do you pronounce upon this traitor ?"

Two dissenting voices would have saved his life, but doomed him to a terrible punishment.

"Death !" savagely shouted every voice assembled. "We are not safe, unless death follows detection !"

A wild piercing shriek rang through the cavern. At the same moment, the Sea Robber advanced, an explosion followed, and the wretched victim fell dead at the feet of a woman, carrying a child in her arms, who had violently burst through all opposition; crying out, in accents of despair,

"Oh! *Madonna*! blessed *Madonna*! save my husband!"

She paused, as the body rolled over at her feet, and seemed for the moment turned to stone. The Captain of the Sea Robbers remained perfectly unmoved, with his discharged double-barrel pistol in his hand.

"How is this?" asked the chief, turning to some of the men. "Who permitted this woman to be present? It is against our rules."

There was a dead silence.

The woman, tall, finely formed, and handsome, with jet black hair and eyes of fire, dashed back her long unconfined tresses, that

fell in profusion over her shoulders. She turned round and gazed fixedly and fiercely into the features of the slayer of her husband.

"Man of blood!" she exclaimed, every word ringing through the cavern. "For this cruel deed you will perish miserably and unpitied. You have murdered an innocent man, and his blood will cry aloud for vengeance on ye all. Remember," she almost screamed, throwing out her right arm, and clasping tightly the terrified child, that clung to her bosom, "before this year expires, each one who stands here will lie like that murdered body, a breathless corpse!" and then pushing aside the astonished robbers, she rushed from the cavern.

Though the men were evidently startled by the vehemence and denunciations of the bereaved wife, their Captain stood unmoved. The moment the woman disappeared, he said,

"Which of you, according to our oaths and rules, will take this woman as a wife?"

"I will," exclaimed Phillipo Vanti, stepping forward from the circle.

"*Benissimo*!" returned the Captain. "Then you, Phillipo Vanti, become responsible for her, and you answer with your life for her silence and security. If she escapes from this island," he pointed to the dead body, "such will be your doom."

"*Cospetto*!" returned the man, "I am aware of that; let it be so."

The men dispersed, carrying off the dead body for burial, and as the grey light of morning broke over the then ruffled deep, the lofty sails of the "Massaniello" bellied to the breeze, and her tall yards dipped towards the crests of the seas. She bore away for the eastward, and soon left the little island a black dot upon the stormy sea.

CHAPTER II.

In the years preceding the French revolution the whole of the maritime coast of the Mediterranean was fearfully infested with piratical crafts, the crews composed of many nations. But the greatest pests of that tideless sea were those *Ladri de Mare*, the Robbers of the Seas. This detestable class of sea rovers were infinitely more to be dreaded than the Algerini or Tunisian corsairs, which could be known at a distance, and ships were able at times to avoid or beat them off. But the *Ladri de Mare*, were

cruel, merciless robbers. Under the guise of peaceful merchantmen, sailing in apparently common merchant ships, these wretches were in many instances a banded community, held together by fearful oaths. They had their spies and agents in the different harbours, who took note of the ships in ports, and selected those vessels with valuable cargoes, noted the number of the crew, their destination, &c. It often happened that the *Ladri* were at anchor in the same harbour, watching their intended victim. Sailing before them, they awaited their approach, boarded them in the silence and darkness of night, and having plundered the ship, usually scuttled her and sunk her with all the crew on board.

They had various places for concealing their plunder, in rocky uninhabited islands, in caverns, &c. There they ripped up boxes and bales, altered ship's papers, and reshipped the goods for other ports.

When the French fleets, at the period of

the revolution of '98, swept those seas, they sunk and destroyed, according to a French work, entitled "Victories and Conquests," in a period of three months, an incredible number of those *Ladri de Mare*; in fact, so terrible was the destruction that they were considered totally annihilated, but such was not the case. In the year 1780, there arrived in Naples an Italian by the name of Manzani. This man took a great range of warehouses on the Quay Toledo, and almost immediately opened a marine store, for the sale of every kind of merchandise appertaining to shipping and sea-faring men.

The Signor Manzani had two sons and one daughter. As his business increased, which it did quickly, he purchased more extensive stores, and his merchandise increased in value, till he became, at the expiration of twenty years, to be considered exceedingly wealthy. His two sons were rarely at home.

His daughter had married a Sicilian, who opened in Palermo a similar kind of store, and who also prospered.

The Signor Manzani died in the year 1804, leaving a very large property to his eldest son, who died in 1840, and his eldest son succeeded to the property. At the period of the opening of our story, 1860, the marine stores existed no longer, for the possessor had become a large landed proprietor, considered immensely rich, and frequented the society of the second class of nobility, but his ambition was to mingle with the highest, who he hoped by this time had forgotten his great grandfather, the marine store dealer.

The Signor Manzani possessed a fine house in the Strada Toledo and a charming country mansion, two leagues from Naples, and on the shores of its magnificent bay. This palazzo and its extensive grounds were, to the surprise of the rich Neapolitan signors,

purchased from the Marchese Pausolo for an extravagant sum, and at the opening of our story there the family principally resided.

The family of the Signor Manzani consisted of one son and one daughter. The son rarely remained for any length of time in Naples; he infinitely preferred Paris—in fact, he openly said it was the only city a man of pleasure and wealth could live in.

He was considered by the Neapolitan belles as a very handsome man, tall and well proportioned, and apparently of a gay and dissipated turn. His sister was esteemed a beauty, but of a haughty, imperious nature. Nevertheless, the great wealth of her father brought many suitors to her feet.

Adjoining the extensive grounds of the Manzani domain, separated only by myrtle hedges and flowering shrubs, were the gardens of the Count Gonzalo's mansion.

The Gonzalos were of a very old and wealthy family; but looked upon with great

suspicion by the Bourbon family, who then ruled the destinies of the fickle Neapolitans.

At the time our story commences the Gonzalos were suffering under a great reverse of fortune, from the loss of the title deeds of certain estates. Still, the Count's fortune was amply sufficient for the support of himself and family, according to his rank. He had one son and two daughters. The son, scarcely nineteen, was in the naval service of the King of Naples; the eldest daughter twenty; the youngest between seventeen and eighteen. Both were remarkable for the elegance of their persons and amiable manners; but the youngest was considered one of the most beautiful of the daughters of Naples.

The Count Gonzalo was not more than five or six and forty, an ardent lover of liberty, and an enthusiast in the regeneration of Italy. With his neighbour Manzani he kept up little or no intercourse; he did not despise him for his origin, but he detested him for his

sycophantic adulation of the royal family and his public denouncement of all free and constitutional principles.

The intercourse, therefore, between the two neighbours was limited to now and then meeting at parties in the mansions of the neighbouring nobility and gentry. During a fête given by the Marchesa Manchini, Giorgio Manzani, being then in Naples, beheld for the first time the lovely and accomplished Marina Gonzalo, the younger of the two sisters. Her uncommon graces of person riveted his entire attention, and in his secret heart he made a vow that Marina should be his wedded bride.

Of a handsome and striking appearance, Giorgio Manzani saw no reason why he might not secure the young girl's affection, and he considered the great wealth he would inherit quite a set-off against his want of rank and title; the more so, as he knew her father was poor, for a nobleman of his rank.

Being introduced to Giorgio Manzani, Marina received him politely, but certainly coldly; and as her eyes for a moment met his, why, she could not say, but she felt a strange sensation of dread steal over her. Our heroine was by no means superstitious, neither had she the slightest belief in the still popular superstition of the Neapolitans, high and low, the *gettatura*, or evil eye, was still firmly believed in, and charms were worn by all classes, as guards against its terrors.

There was nothing, however, in Giorgio Manzani's features to displease; on the contrary, his countenance was open and cheerful in its expression, his eyes dark and penetrating, and his manners simple and unassuming, and yet Marina, as she joined her sister, after going through a dance with the younger Manzani, said in a low voice,

"That is the first dance, and I will take care it shall be the last I join in with the Signor Giorgio Manzani."

"Why so, *cara?*" asked the elder sister, a little surprised. "The Signor Giorgio is a handsome young man, and, I assure you, thought a great deal of by our sex."

"Ah! well, there is no accounting for likes and dislikes. I do not care whether he is handsome or not. I have nothing to say against him; but he creates in me an unpleasant feeling I cannot account for."

"You have no heart to lose, my little sister," returned the Signora Gonzalo, "that's something."

"Indeed, that has nothing to do with it, Bianca. However, it is of little moment; we may not meet again for some time, for I believe he rarely remains long in Naples. At all events, Bianca, you will allow that his father is a man one can cordially dislike."

"Oh! I can join you there; but here comes your lover at last, and looking right well. You will allow he is handsome, at all events."

As she spoke, a remarkably fine, high-spirited young man, in a naval uniform, made his way through the throng, and was soon by Marina's side.

"So you managed to get ashore in time, Claudio," said Marina, looking up with a happy smile, and putting her arm through his. "How is my dear brother Carlo?"

"He is right well, dearest," whispered Lieutenant Trepani, "and you will be glad to hear a piece of news, which fortunately I am the first to tell you. I have had a kind of promotion. I have left the 'Serena' frigate, and am appointed to command the 'Etna' gun brig, and as I had the nomination of a lieutenant I selected Carlo."

"Oh! how rejoiced I am," cried Marina, her eyes sparkling and a delighted smile on her coral lips, as she gazed up into the animated features of her lover.

As she did so, and slightly turned her head, she beheld, within a few paces of her, Giorgio

Manzani, standing leaning against a pillar, with his dark eyes fixed, with a deep and searching expression, on her.

"Ah! that man," she uttered, and a kind of tremour for an instant came over her.

"What man?" anxiously questioned her lover, in a low voice. "You tremble."

"I am a silly girl," said Marina. "Come out into the illuminated gardens. I did not wish to come to this fête, but you know you said you had a chance of being here, as the 'Serena' would be in Napoli, about this time."

Pressing through the crowded saloons, the young couple passed between the great glass folding doors, into the beautifully illuminated gardens of the Manchini Palace. The walks were thronged with gay groups, there were pavilions, with tables spread with luxuries of every kind, to tempt the crowd; there were playing fountains, fireworks, &c.,—in fact, no expense had been spared to render the

fête a splendid one. It was given to celebrate the twenty-first birthday of the Marchese Manchini's eldest son.

As the lovers rambled through the least thronged walks, they could converse with greater ease.

"What man were you speaking of, dear Marina?" asked Claudio Trepani.

"Well, in truth, I was very silly to make that remark," replied Marina. "The person who called forth my exclamation was Signor Giorgio Manzani."

"Ah! I know him, at least by sight," returned our hero, with a slight flush on his cheek; "but what can the great grandson of a marine store keeper have to say to Marina Gonzalo?"

The beautiful daughter of the Count laughed, and with a merry tone in her voice, said, "Oh! so you imagine, Signor Lieutenant, that Giorgio Manzani has no right to request the hand of Marina Gonzalo for a

dance. But the fact is, my dear Claudio, I was introduced to him by the Marchesa, and could not well refuse the request; but strange to say, that young man has created an unpleasant feeling in me, and for no earthly reason that I can conjecture; he said not a word beyond the common place topics of the fête, and the moment the dance was concluded I joined Bianca."

"There's something mysterious about that man," remarked Trepani. "His father's influence with the minister of police, the most cruel and unprincipled of our young king's advisers, has caused more hatred--"

"Hush!" uttered Marina, in a low voice, and pulling her lover forward. "There he is, walking with the old Marchese Manchini. Does he know you, Claudio; for he had his eyes fixed upon you?"

"Oh! yes, he knows me very well. I received my appointment from his nephew, the Baron de ———, and he was present, and he made use of these words:

"'Remember, young man, you are remotely connected by blood to the royal family of Naples. These are times when men should be careful what they say and do. You will be employed to carry important despatches, and your conduct will be watched.'

"I replied, 'My lord, I trust I know my duty to my king, and hope his majesty will have faith in my loyalty.'"

"Is there any truth," asked Marina, in the same low voice, "that the fleet shows disloyal feelings towards the king? Can it be possible that Garibaldi means to attempt a landing on the coast of Sicily?"

"It is decidedly believed he will, and if he does, he will make a prodigious effort to free the island from the yoke of the Bourbons. Our ships are on the look-out. As to the feeling amongst the fleet, at present I see no reason to suspect either officers or crews of disaffection. I will stand by my king, till he himself doubts and disowns me."

The lovers then began to converse upon

subjects dear to their own hearts. Marina had been betrothed to Claudio Trepani, by the mutual consent of friends and parents, many years previous, and they loved each other with a true and most devoted affection.

Lieutenant Trepani had been left an orphan at an early age. His father, Count Alberto Trepani, ranked amongst the highest nobility, and was a most sincere friend of the Count Gonzalo. A crushing misfortune deprived the Count Trepani of his large ancestral estates, and he died, after betrothing his son to Marina, and leaving him and his only sister under the guardianship of the Count Gonzalo.

At an early age the young man entered the Neapolitan navy, dropping the title of Count, which did not, he considered, suit his shattered fortunes. Though of very high birth, even distantly connected with royalty, the deceased Count Trepani was far from a favourite with

the reigning family. The old king had personally disliked the Count, who, like Marina's father, was strongly opposed to the tyrannical acts of King Ferdinard, and openly avowed his opinion that a constitutional form of government could alone render the people happy.

Had not the Count died, he would surely have felt the king's resentment. On the death of the old king, some influential friends of the Trepani family attempted to influence the young king's ministers to restore to the young Trepani the forfeited estates of the father; but the minister coolly declined interfering, as he said it was not unlikely that the boy, on attaining manhood, might walk in the footsteps of his sire.

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